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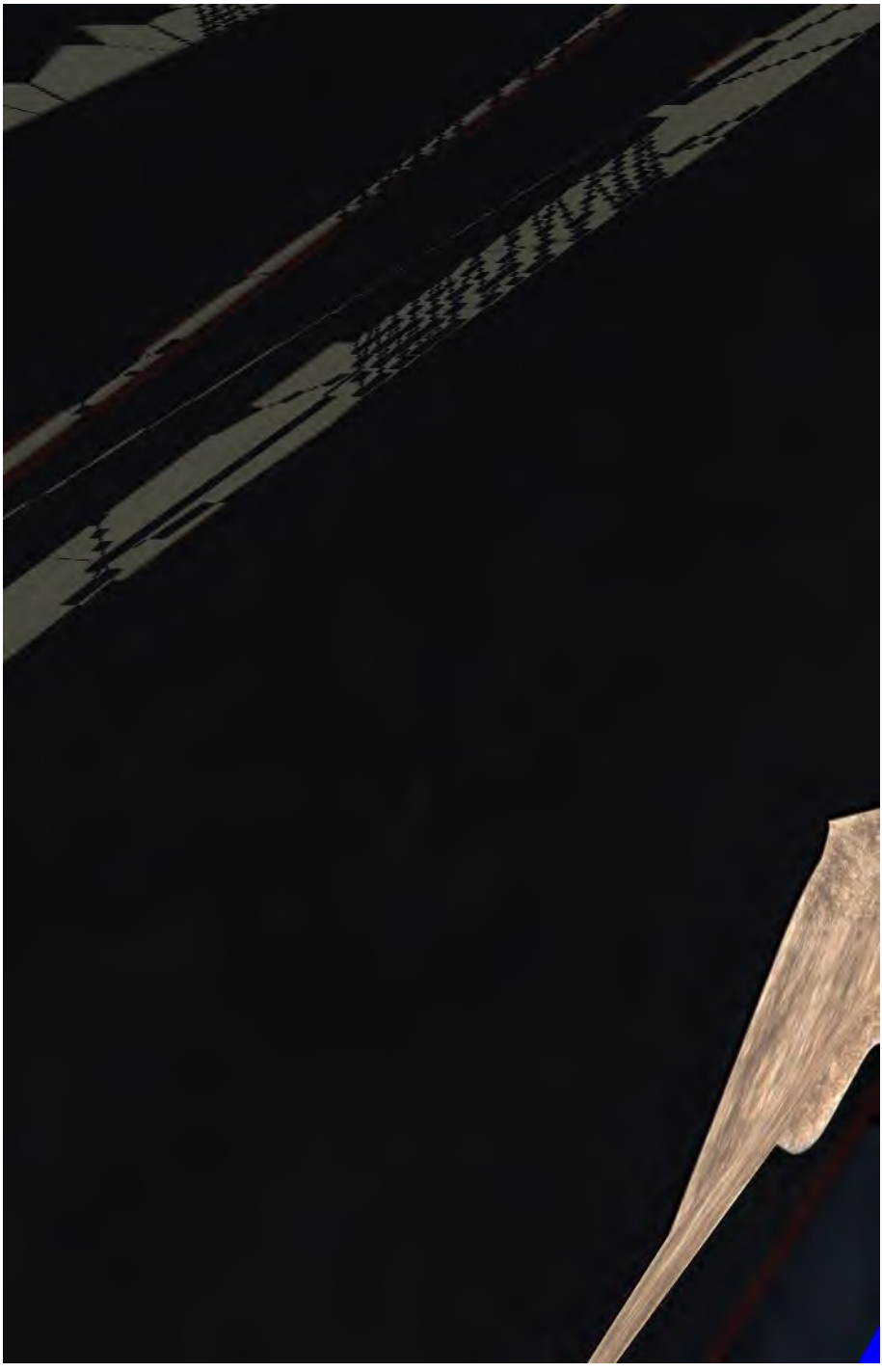
A WOMAN
IN SPITE OF HERSELF



A WOMAN IN SPITE OF HERSELF.

VOL. II.

A WOMAN IN SPITE OF HERSELF.

BY

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

"LIVE IT DOWN,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PART I.

CONTINUED.

IN SILK AND SERGE.

A WOMAN IN SPITE OF HERSELF.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FURTHER INQUIRIES AND DISCLOSURES.

THOUGH he deferred taking public steps for the vindication of his sister's character, and refrained from torturing her with revelations of the revolting charges preferred against her, until Miss Messurier's obsequies were solemnized, Felix Avalon lost no time in endeavouring to ascertain more particulars of the calumnies which it was his object to discredit. During the interval between his relation's death and interment, whilst maintaining strict silence to Fay on a subject which, on coming to her knowledge, would necessarily occasion her the sharpest pangs of shame and indignation, he

communicated his ghastly discoveries to his solicitor, Mr. Corbet, of the well-known legal firm of Corbet and Wilkinson, and extorted from Mr. Quex, of the Market-Place Library, all that the librarian could impart to him respecting the causes of his discomfort.

His interviews with Mr. Corbet and Mr. Quex only aggravated his alarm and disgust. The lawyer, whose professional caution had induced him to be reticent to his client on a matter that had for weeks required his attention, became abundantly communicative when Felix, appealing to him for professional aid, entreated him to withhold from him nothing that malice and credulity had combined to invent to his own or his sister's discredit. For a minute, indeed, the lawyer could scarcely believe that his client knew so little of the gossip of the city, and seemed to suspect him of insincerity and hypocritical action when he averred that the existence of the anonymous libels had only just come to his knowledge. Felix Avalon's earnestness and manifestly unaffected anguish, however, soon convinced Mr. Corbet that his client was

not playing a pretender's part; and having satisfied himself on this point, the solicitor gave a statement that was qualified by no reserve.

For several weeks, the lawyer said, libels, dispersed through the post-office, had been received by numerous individuals of the highest respectability in Quebec. Some of them had preferred charges of revolting immorality against gentlewomen of the best reputation, and families in the colony; others had insinuated accusations of dishonesty against public functionaries, or thrown doubt on the solvency of the first merchants of the city: all of them that had come under Mr. Corbet's observation were anonymous, and written in the handwriting of a woman feigning a masculine hand. Their number it was impossible for the lawyer either to state or conjecture, for doubtless the receivers of many of them were anxious to keep them secret. They must, however, be numerous, since Mr. Corbet had inspected no fewer than twenty-eight of the anonymous fabrications, which had been submitted to his observation by some of his most influential clients. It was, moreover,

certain, Mr. Corbet testified, in a hard, grating, business-like voice, that general suspicion credited Miss Avalon with the authorship of these abominable letters. That the suspicion was just, Mr. Corbet was not in a position to affirm; for lawyers were wont to form their opinions on logical processes from the evidence of facts, and at present the evidence against Miss Avalon, so far as Mr. Corbet knew about it, was by no means complete. On the other hand, though he had always cherished respectful admiration for Miss Avalon, and would use all his zeal to vindicate her character, he could not say that the charge against her appeared to his legal mind absolutely incredible. He declined to have any strong opinion whatever respecting his fair client's case, until he had all its facts under his consideration. Experience made lawyers slow to believe anything, and yet open to believe everything. Ladies who had the ability and taste to handle a pen with effect were sometimes most indiscreet satirists; but nothing should make Mr. Corbet believe Miss Avalon guilty of the charges preferred against her by

general rumour, until her guilt had been demonstrated. Under existing circumstances, it was enough for him to assure Mr. Felix Avalon that society universally believed in his sister's guilt; and there were those who inclined to the opinion that Mr. Avalon himself was, at least, his sister's coadjutor in her defamatory achievements. After what that gentleman had said, Mr. Corbet was convinced of the cruelty and groundlessness of the suspicions which affected Mr. Avalon's personal honour; but so far as Miss Avalon was concerned, it would be better that Mr. Corbet should enter on the consideration of her case without prejudice, though it would, of course, be impossible for him to divest himself of a certain illogical predisposition to believe in her innocence.

That Mr. Corbet could speak thus coolly of his client's position, and regard Fay's innocence of the crimes charged upon her as an open question, to be settled by a dispassionate examination of evidence, appeared to Felix a painful demonstration of the hurtful influence of calumny. A few weeks since it would have

seemed incredible to him that any gentleman of Quebec could be induced to take so judicial a view of such abominable accusations. But though he was tempted for a moment to resent the lawyer's tone and treatment of the case, the outraged brother concealed his sense of indignity, and consulted the man of business with respect to the measures which it would be best to take to disprove the slanders. Mr. Corbet strongly urged him to make no appeal for protection to the press. Newspaper discussion would only aggravate existing evils, and would effect nothing for the accomplishment of their object. If Felix would remain quiet for a few days, some imprudent talker would give the clergyman an opportunity of bringing the affair before the highest court of justice in the colony. On the authority of his instructions, Mr. Corbet would cause the police to do their utmost to detect the real libeller, and would promptly set the law in action against any person who could be proved to have uttered a defamatory statement against Miss Avalon. Had Felix any suspicion who

the culprit was? Could he name any person who had an object in aspersing Miss Avalon? Of course any communications which he might make to his legal adviser in answer to these questions would be official and privileged communications, and be guarded by the questioner with honourable jealousy.

Thus pressed, Felix imparted to the lawyer his reasons for believing that Major Tilbury regarded Fay with the bitterest animosity, and was the enemy who sought to cover her with ignominy by craftily attributing to her libels of his own composition.

"It, perhaps," Felix observed, on completing his statement, "may appear to you incredible that a man in Major Tilbury's position should wreak his vengeance on a woman in so barbarous and execrable a manner."

"Not at all, my dear sir," the lawyer responded. "As I told you just now, lawyers are equally slow to disbelieve and to believe. A considerable proportion of the cases established in the courts of law are attended with improbabilities that would cause the non-legal

mind to repudiate them as impossible. You winced when I told you that your sister's legal defender must take the unchivalric course of regarding her innocence or guilt as a question whose answer must depend on evidence. Find comfort in my assurance that I am ready to believe any charge of rascality against her enemy, on its being established by proper means. To say the least, it is not more incredible that Major Tilbury should be the diabolical practitioner you believe him to be, than that your sister should have exerted her ingenuity in destroying the fame of her most intimate female friends, and the characters of her father's most valued comrades. But all that you have said about Major Tilbury is no evidence that he is guilty of the conduct attributed to him. At most, it merely demonstrates that he is animated by furious animosity against Miss Avalon. At present, of course, you have no positive evidence that any of the libels proceeded from his pen."

"Of course, I have none."

"Precisely so. Then you must be careful."

"That is why I consult you and put myself in your hands."

"You are not aware that Major Tilbury has himself received some of the libels, in which certain officers of the Queen's service are reflected upon calumniously."

"Is it so, indeed!"

"Moreover, in some of the libels addressed to Major Tilbury's friends, he is the object of the calumniator's attacks. Libellers are not accustomed to libel themselves. If Major Tilbury is the author of the anonymous letter sent to his particular chum, Lieutenant Trevor, which identifies him with the villain in your sister's last novel, and charges him with seducing a miserable little milliner of this city, to say the least of it, the Major is a curiosity, who deserves special commemoration in the next work on the eccentricities of crime."

"Still," rejoined Felix, somewhat staggered by this new revelation, "it is possible that he libelled himself, for the sake of securing himself from suspicion."

"No doubt, everything is possible in villany,

and the hypothesis that he has defamed himself is consistent with your view of his character. But enough of conjectures. Major Tilbury shall be watched. Rely on me to watch him, and to do my best to discover a ground on which you can reply effectively to his attacks, if he be your assailant. Let me see you again on the day after Miss Messurier's funeral; and in the mean time, if I make any discovery which you ought to know without delay, I will communicate with you promptly."

From Mr. Corbet's office Felix proceeded to Mr. Quex's library, where he was successful in urging the librarian to speak frankly of the circumstances which had caused him to participate to a considerable extent in the prevalent feeling against his former patron's children. Humble person though he was, Mr. Quex had not escaped the malevolence of the anonymous slanderer, who had accused him to some of his customers of dishonest practices in the way of trade. Besides confirming all that Bishop Bignold and Mr. Corbet had said of the prolific nature of the anonymous defamer's industry, the

librarian drew Felix Avalon's attention to the alarming fact that the handwriting of the calumnious letters bore a suspicious resemblance in some of its peculiarities to Fay's caligraphy. Mr. Quex was himself a caligraphic expert of no mean sagacity and judgment, and comparing one of the libels which had come into his possession, with several specimens of Miss Avalon's handwriting which were also in his custody, he assured Felix that the similarity of the two styles of penmanship was perilously strong. The expert's art was, the librarian admitted, one of dangerous uncertainty and liability to error; but by all its rules he was compelled to say the points of resemblance in the two styles supported the suspicion that the defamatory papers had been produced by Miss Avalon using her pen to feign a masculine writing.

Wounded in pride by the revolting particulars which his inquiries brought to his knowledge, tortured with anticipations of the dismay and anguish which those particulars would occasion his sister, and horrified by his realization of the difficulty which he would encounter

in exploding the abominable machinations against her character, Felix Avalon during the next few days suffered an amount of mental agony that his nervous temperament could barely sustain. Sleep never for an instant visited his pillow between his interview with Bishop Bignold and Miss Messurier's funeral. At times a dread seized him that his reason would give away under the weight of his trials. Bravely, however, he persisted in his resolution to keep Fay in ignorance of her ignominious position until she had seen the grave closed over the coffin of her relative.

At length the day came when he and Fay, attended by the servants of the Fairmead and the domestics of Miss Messurier's modest establishment, witnessed the deceased lady's obsequies in the Catholic cathedral, under the observation of a numerous congregation, that had assembled less out of respect for the dead than at the instigation of sensational excitement and vulgar curiosity.

On the evening of that day, when the chief mourners at the funeral were closeted together

in the Fairmead library, Felix communicated to his sister all that he knew of the shame and peril in which the satanic contrivances of their enemy had placed them; and when he observed the calmness with which she received the nauseous disclosures, he felt relief at having again a sharer of his anxieties.

Pallor, indeed, took possession of Fay's grand countenance as her brother proceeded with his terrifying statement; now and again a nervous twitching and unsteadiness were observable in her noble features; but, even when the worst had been told, her large, burning eyes were dimmed by no moisture, and she exhibited no signs of agitation likely to deprive her of consciousness.

"It is impossible," she said almost in her ordinary voice, when Felix had completed his communications, "that such machinations should effect their object. My whole life, the affection cherished by Quebec for our dear father, my innocence, God who protects the innocent, will secure me from the destruction prepared for me, and bring our enemy to his proper punish-

ment. But for you, Felix," she added, with a sorrowfulness that was very pathetic, though it failed to reduce the speaker to tears, "what can I do to atone for the misery and degradation that I have brought upon you? May God pardon me, as completely as you do, for all my wilfulness and naughtiness!"

An hour later, physical prostration brought to Felix Avalon the slumber of which he was in urgent need; and whilst he once again was visited with unconsciousness, Fay passed the lingering hours of night in wakefulness and tears.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MILITARY CHIEF OF THE QUEBEC CONSTABULARY.

ON the following morning Felicia Avalon, whose black dress heightened the effect of the paleness and dejection of her face, was sitting beside the table at which she and Felix had met for their late breakfast, when the tinkling sound of horse-bells announced the arrival of an early caller at the Fairmead.

"It is Captain Darby," Felix observed, as an open sleigh, laden with three individuals, passed the window of the breakfast-room, and stopt before the chief entrance of the villa.

"Perhaps Mr. Corbet has requested him to confer with us," Fay remarked, whilst surprise and apprehension gave her nerves a painful

shock, and caused her heart to beat quickly. "We may as well see him here. Tell Martha to show him into this room."

In another minute Captain Darby, the first officer of the Quebec police,—or, to use the title by which he preferred to describe himself, "the military chief of the Quebec constabulary,"—had entered the breakfast-room, and after greeting its occupants with the courtesies due to persons of his private acquaintance, had taken the seat which they invited him to occupy.

"I presume," said Felix, adopting his sister's suggestion, though he entertained a fear that the captain had appeared as the agent of his official superiors, "that your early, but not unwelcome, visit is consequent on information which Mr. Corbet, acting in my interest, has given to you."

A person of more than average height, and very gentlemanly address, Captain Darby, seen in a London drawing-room, might have been mistaken for a dandified treasury clerk, or an aspirant for the honours of the diplomatic service, or a foppish carpet-soldier. No observer

of his elegant figure, fastidious bearing, and manners not altogether innocent of effeminacy, would have supposed him to be a zealous, resolute colonial police-officer, indefatigable in the discharge of rude and repulsive duties, and never disposed to shirk the unrefined business of his calling. In the hey-day of his fortunes, the captain, whilst holding a commission in a crack cavalry regiment, had been a brilliant Belgravian exquisite; and though pecuniary mishap had compelled him to retire from the army of his sovereign and the saloons of duchesses, and earn his livelihood in the Canadian police, he declined to lay aside the indications of his aristocratic nurture and experiences, as things incompatible with a plebeian employment. That he was as fascinating and handsome a fellow as he imagined himself to be, the impartial historian cannot aver. His small, piercing black eyes were unpleasantly expressive of cunning; and the most obvious fault of his slight, aquiline profile was suggestive of Israelitish extraction. The pains expended on the training of his thread-like moustaches and flossy whiskers were

disagreeably manifest; and whilst the smile, which never played over his mouth without occasioning a peculiar action of his nose, was eloquent of insincerity, the feeble imperial which decorated his chin betrayed the egregious vanity of its wearer. But though his appearance was more suggestive of manly frivolousness than muscular robustness, the military chief of the Quebec constabulary was known throughout the colony to be a most vigilant and efficient public servant. In more than one riot he had demonstrated the astonishing muscular force of his delicately-moulded body and dainty hands, and had exhibited qualities that secured for him the complimentary detestation of Irish roughs and New York rowdies. Moreover, the man thoroughly liked his work. The authority and responsibilities of his post were altogether congenial to the military chief, who liked to prowl about the corridors of gaols and public offices with cat-like tread, to terrify his subordinates by coming noiselessly upon them at moments when they were least desirous and apprehensive of his appearance; and who was never happier than

when it devolved upon him to exercise his sagacity and craftiness in tracing a crime of curious incidents and extraordinary complications to its hidden perpetrators. Whatever discontent he felt with his lot, was mere dissatisfaction with the colonial obscurity and lowliness of his position. As chief of the police of some vast metropolis—say London, or, better still, Paris—Captain Darby would have deemed himself the most fortunate of human kind.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Avalon," the military chief of the Quebec constabulary answered, with diplomatic composure, when he had seated himself. "I am here in compliance with directions given me by Sir Ronald Clavering, the chairman of our bench of magistrates, who has ordered me to apprise Miss Avalon that her presence will be required at the Court House this afternoon at two o'clock. Perhaps it will be more agreeable to Miss Avalon's feelings, without being prejudicial to public interests, that before addressing her on the cause of my appearance here on the present rather embarrassing occasion, I should state to you, sir, in your

sister's absence, the nature and object of my business."

Though Captain Darby spoke of the occasion as an embarrassing one, his demeanour was not marked by any signs of embarrassment. No gentleman, making a visit of courtesy to a lady, could have been more self-possessed and affable.

"If you wish to speak with me privately, Captain Darby, be so kind as to accompany me to my study," Felix replied, assenting to the captain's considerate proposal. "We will return to you, Fay, in the course of a few minutes."

"There is no need for you to retire," Fay answered with outward composure, but with a tremulousness of voice that revealed the effort which it cost her to maintain an appearance of calmness. "Captain Darby has nothing to tell you which I shall not be soon called upon to hear from his lips. He is aware of the slanderous rumours that for several weeks have been in circulation against me; and he is here to arrest me on a charge of writing and publishing criminal libels." Turning from her brother to

Captain Darby, who had intimated by an assenting movement of the head that she had devined the object of his visit, she added, "Believe me, sir, I sympathize with the distress which you must necessarily experience in performing a very painful duty. You may be sure, sir, that in return for your politeness to me I will show every considerateness to you."

"Of course, Miss Avalon," responded Captain Darby, who had often waltzed with Fay at Assembly balls, "it occasions me discomfort to intrude upon you at a time of domestic mourning, as an instrument appointed to place you in a position that will be very repugnant to your feelings; but duty is duty, and in discharging the functions of my office, I endeavour, as far as possible, to make no distinction between painful and agreeable duties. Allow me, madam, however, to thank you for your desire to diminish the annoyance and difficulty which I experience in informing you that you must permit me to attend you to the Court House."

"I understand, sir. I am your prisoner."

"It is my duty to tell you so, Miss Avalon."

"Have you any further communication to make?"

"My warrant—the warrant which authorizes and directs my action on the present occasion," replied Captain Darby, whose unusual verbosity was due to his sense of the delicacy and repulsiveness of his task, "requires me to apprehend you, and bring you to the Justices' room at the Court House by two o'clock this afternoon, and it requires me to search this house for papers that may substantiate the accusations preferred against you."

"My sister and I," Felix interposed, "will do our best to facilitate your search, Captain Darby."

"It would, of course, be within my powers," the chief of police explained, "to take possession *en masse* of Miss Avalon's writing-desk, folios, and all receptacles of papers, in which I might reasonably expect to find such evidence as the Attorney-General will need for the criminal prosecution that will probably be directed against Miss Avalon. But it will be enough for the purposes of justice, and doubtless more

agreeable to Miss Avalon, that I should take from this house such papers as will unquestionably be of service in the approaching inquiry."

"You are very kind and thoughtful for me, and I thank you," Fay Avalon observed, in reply to a speech that had been delivered to Felix rather than to herself, though it was uttered for her special information. "You would wish to look at my writing-desk and folios—perhaps you will wish to take them away; but, having passed your eye over my collections of letters and manuscripts, you will leave those of them, that obviously have no connection with the objects of your investigation, in my brother's custody."

"Precisely so."

"Then you had better accompany me at once to my 'sanctum,' where I am accustomed to use my cruelly maligned pen, and make your examination without delay," Felicia Avalon returned, rising, as she spoke, from her seat in a manner indicative of her purpose to conduct the chief constable to her private apartment.

"Perhaps one or two other matters should be

attended to first," said Captain Darby, in a very deliberate and rather lack-a-daisical fashion.

"We are in your hands, Captain Darby," observed the brother and sister simultaneously.

"You would doubtless like to look at the warrant which is the legal authority for my intrusion upon you, and for the inquisitorial measures which I am about to take."

"It is quite unnecessary for us to inspect it," Fay assured the dandy detective. "Your statement of its contents is quite sufficient for me and my brother."

"But it would be more satisfactory to me," urged Captain Darby, with an affectation of utter imperturbability, taking a document from the breast-pocket of his long, closely-fitting, and fur-collared overcoat, "if Mr. Avalon would go through the formality of passing his eye over the terms of this authorization."

Thus pressed, Felix accepted the warrant and perused its ample and clear instructions.

"This inquiry is instituted by Admiral Mullenger?" Felix remarked in an interrogative tone, when he had perused the document.

"The libel," returned Captain Darby, "which will be brought especially under the notice of the magistrates this afternoon, is an anonymous letter that Admiral Mullenger received nine days since. It contains defamatory imputations on the character of Mrs. Mullenger, the Admiral's lady, whom the libeller accuses of shameful familiarity with no less important a personage than Monseigneur Hippolyte Rigaud, the Catholic bishop of this city."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Felix, with a groan of anguish. "Is it possible that my sister is to endure the indignity of being compelled to answer to the odious and incredible charge of having concocted and uttered such an atrocious libel?"

"Be calm, dear brother. If you," urged Felicia Avalon, with a composure which Captain Darby observed, and put his own construction upon, "can bear the shame, I am able to endure it. The more revolting and enormous the crime, the more sure it is that gentlemen, who were my father's friends, and have known me from infancy, will be unable to believe it."

"Of course," remarked the military chief of the Quebec police, as composedly as if he were chatting about an ordinary occurrence, "it is no part of my duty to state anything that I know of the evidence that will be adduced in support of a very singular accusation, but I may assure you that the charge is not more remarkable than the testimony which gives it a colour—a legal colour, I mean—of possibility."

"The evidence will be communicated to me in due course," said Fay, with astonishing self-possession. "You need not trouble yourself, Captain Darby, to reveal to me what I shall know quite soon enough. Deal with me precisely as though I were an ordinary prisoner."

"That is beyond my power, Miss Avalon," the Captain returned, gallantly, "for I cannot forget that you are a lady whom I have been proud to regard as among the number of my friends. But I can so far observe ordinary rules as to caution you that whatever you say to me may be used in evidence against you."

"The caution is quite needless," replied Fay, meaning to imply that, since she was absolutely

innocent, it was impossible for her to make an admission calculated to aid in the demonstration of her guilt.

"Clearly—quite needless," assented the Captain, intending to signify that it was obvious that so quiet and thoroughly self-possessed a prisoner was in no danger of committing herself by indiscreet speech.

Though he was agreeably relieved by Fay's demeanour from an apprehension that she would occasion him discomfort by tragical utterances of despair and hysterical declarations of her innocence, Captain Darby was far from being favourably impressed by her composure and collectedness.

"We had better proceed at once," Fay continued, again intimating her readiness to afford the inquisitor every assistance in her power, "to the scrutiny of my papers. If you will accompany me to my writing-room—the only room in the house that contains any collection of manuscripts written by me—I will show you every document in my desk and the drawers of my library-table."

"She will aid me, after a fashion," thought the suspicious Captain. "Either her receptacles contain no articles of evidence, or she relies on her ability to withdraw them from my observation whilst making a parade of showing me everything."

"You will come with us, Felix?" Felicia Avalon entreated of her brother, as she prepared to lead her visitor to her writing-room.

"Yes, Mr. Avalon must accompany us," observed the Captain, who, in his suspicion of both brother and sister, did not wish either of them to leave his sight until he had completed his search for criminatory papers.

"I will not leave you, dear," Felix assented to his sister's request, flushing with anger as he detected his visitor's distrust and purpose from the slightly authoritative tone of the Captain's last words.

"But first let us settle another matter," said the Captain, staying Felicia Avalon in her progress to the breakfast-room door, and resuming the seat from which he had risen a few moments before.

"Whatever directions you give, sir, shall be exactly obeyed," Felix intimated, chafing under the chief-constable's quietude and irritating display of considerateness.

"Let us see,"-said the Captain, unbuttoning his over-coat, and taking his gold repeater from his waistcoat pocket.

"Ah!" he continued, indolently, "the clock on the fire-place is right, and we have plenty of time. We must leave this place at one, or one-twenty at the latest. Believe, Mr. Avalon, that I wish to give as few directions as possible. So far as duty permits me to be courteous, I should prefer to act on your instructions. Miss Avalon must permit me to attend her in person to the court-house, but I venture to leave it to you to make arrangements for the drive into town. My sleigh is an open vehicle; and as your sister could not take a seat in it without attracting disagreeable attention on our way through the city, you will no doubt prefer to put your carriage at our disposal."

"Thank you—thank you for the suggestion,"

rejoined Felix, really grateful to his persecutor for the timely proposal.

"No occasion for thanks, I assure you, Mr. Avalon," the polite superintendent of police answered. "I am a Christian gentleman, though I am a vigilant constable, and both as a Christian and a gentleman, I recognize the obligation to do to others as I should like them to do unto me."

"I will ring and order the carriage to be ready for us at one o'clock," said Felix, touching the bell-pull as he spoke.

"Don't give the servant who answers that summons any intimation of our intention to visit your writing-room, Miss Avalon," Captain Darby ejaculated quickly, a suspicion seizing him that the servant might be the prisoner's confederate, and upon a hint remove criminatory papers from the room which they were about to visit, or might in some other way render the search ineffectual.

Too agitated, notwithstanding her apparent composure, to observe the signs of Captain Darby's distrust and prejudice, which her brother was

not equally fortunate to overlook, Felicia Avalon replied, "I have no wish to make my maid the sharer of my humiliations."

Which simple reply had scarcely escaped her lips, when the door of the breakfast-room was opened by Martha, who was instructed by Felix to give orders for the preparation of her mistress's carriage, and was requested by Captain Darby to inform the two constables in his sleigh that they might return at once to Quebec, as he had no immediate need of their services.

CHAPTER XX.

RIGHT OF SEARCH.

ON entering Fay Avalon's private study and writing-room, whither he proceeded together with the brother and sister, as soon as Martha had retired to execute her orders, Captain Darby found himself in a cheerful room on the first floor of the villa—an apartment furnished with books and pictures and ornaments appropriate to a lady's "sanctum," and commanding a wide view of snow-covered country bounded in the distance by leafless woodland and grand hills.

There was no fire in the room, but otherwise it had an air of comfort and the appearance of being habitually used.

Apologizing for the absence of fire, and

throwing open the door that led from the study to her sleeping-room, in which there was a thoroughly Canadian pile of burning wood, Felicia Avalon remarked to her visitor, "Since my aunt's illness I have had no fire in my study, so I am afraid that you will find it chilly; but the coldness is tempered by the warmth of the next room."

"I shall not feel it too cold," answered Captain Darby, putting his hand on the fur collar of his thick coat.

"Here is my writing-table with my desk upon it. Now, sir, what will you look at first?"

"You had better open each of the drawers of the writing-table. Are they locked?"

"Yes."

"You have the key at hand?"

"Yes—here it is," Felicia Avalon replied, taking the key from a small casket of carved oak, which stood on the table. "It is my custom to keep my places locked."

"Excuse me, Miss Avalon, if I caution you once more not to tell me anything which it would be better for you to keep to yourself.

Remember the object of my visit. I did not ask you to make any statement as to whether you were in the habit of locking your drawers."

Felicia Avalon's large eyes opened wide with a look of surprise, and then an expression of alarm passed quickly over her face as she saw from the inquisitive cautionary words how dangerous her position appeared to him.

Each of the drawers of the square mahogany table Felicia Avalon then opened under Captain Darby's watchful eyes; and as she pulled out each drawer she gave him a statement of its contents. One of them contained nothing but old manuscript books, in which she had years before written the French and German exercises that she had preserved as memorials of her girlish industry under successive professors and her one dearly-loved governess. Another, the contents of which occasioned the lady a blush as they were exhibited to the chief constable's scrutiny, contained a not less bulky accumulation of Latin and Greek manuscripts, the witnesses of her unfeminine familiarity with the de-

partments of study in which she had formerly been her brother's help-mate and teacher. "These things might as well have been burnt years since," she observed. "I began to preserve them because I thought they might some day be of use to me, and then I continued to keep them out of tenderness for possessions that reminded me of old times." There was a third drawer, full of letters, diaries, common-place-books; sheer rubbish to everyone save Fay, Felix, and the dealers in waste-paper, but precious to her because they contained no line which had not been written by her mother. A store of letters in her father's hand-writing, penned to her or Felix or their mother, was next exposed to the Captain, who, after glancing at the dusty and accurately docketed packets, declined to examine them minutely. The polite constable, of course, had no wish to pry into secrets which the lady naturally guarded with jealous affection. There was something of indignation in the fervour with which he declined to trouble her to unfold the packets of letters in the next two drawers, which she as-

sured him contained nothing but epistles from her female friends, the newest of which were at least two years old. Had not the discolouration of the envelopes of these packets accorded with Felicia's statement of their age, perhaps Captain Darby would have been more curious about their contents; but, as it was, he made the lady's offer to open the wrappers an occasion for assuring her that he wished his inquiry to be as little offensive as possible to her feelings.

"And what do these two large bottom drawers contain?" the Captain inquired when he was satisfied that the other receptacles contained nothing to reward a microscopic search of their contents.

"This drawer," Felicia Avalon answered, opening as she spoke one of the deep drawers, "contains nothing but old bills and new bills, and accounts of my domestic or personal expenditure."

Scanning the collection of red morocco-covered books, great and small, and of tradesmen's bills put together in packets, Captain Darby re-

marked, "I won't trouble myself to look through them."

"Let me open the other large drawer for you, Captain Darby, though it contains nothing but a stock of fresh stationery," urged Felicia, in a tone which implied that, though she was quite ready to turn every key in her private quarters backwards and forwards any number of times for his advantage, it was not probable that he would care to waste time by looking over a lot of new letter paper and envelopes.

The tone was quite enough to determine Captain Darby to look into the drawer.

So the drawer was unlocked, and to Felicia's lively bewonderment, the Captain spent nearly a quarter of an hour, examining the different samples of paper,—looking intently at whatever trade-marks they might bear, and holding up half-a-dozen sheets in succession to the light, as though he deemed it possible for the water-marks to convict her of felony.

"I had better take away that lot of paper, and those loose envelopes," he said, as mildly

and complaisantly as though he were arranging to take them away for her benefit.

"You have my permission to do so."

"Thank you. Have you any more of the same sort?"

"No. I remember that I bought that light-blue paper and those large awkward envelopes at Montreal; and I am sure that I have no more stationery of the same kind."

"The paper certainly came from Montreal," was the rejoinder. "You see, it is stamped in the corner, 'Smith and Hewetson, Montreal.'"

"Indeed, I never troubled myself to read the letters on the stamp."

"Probably not. Indeed, I should say, most likely not."

A pause, during which Captain Darby gathered together the Montreal envelopes and paper, and methodically folded them in a wrapper, which he then and there labelled with a descriptive note.

"And now for the desk," said the gentlemanly constable, with a tone of relief in his rather affected voice, as though he felt thankful for

having neared the end of a very disagreeable task. "Of course, it will be more annoying to you to open your desk than it was to show me those drawers. I sincerely wish that my duty did not compel me to subject you to vexation and indignity."

Raising the lid of the deeper compartment of her large desk, Felicia Avalon entreated him to complete his work without regard for her feelings, which the incidents of the last few weeks had rendered callous to insult. "Here," she added, pointing to the open compartment, "you will find letters of comparatively recent date, addressed to me by various friends. If I shrink from displaying them to you, it is because they are, for the most part, the confidential epistles of ladies who wrote with no apprehension that their gossip would be submitted to the eyes of a stranger."

"Let us open them together. Any letter that does not appear to be in your handwriting shall escape my perusal, and be confided at once to your brother for safe keeping."

Whereupon Felicia unfolded the letters, ex-

hibiting their signatures and enough of their handwriting to satisfy the inspector that they were not productions of her pen. Of all the contents of the compartment there was only one paper which the Captain seized, and this document was a copy of the letter which Miss Avalon had written to her London publishers, when she transmitted to them the manuscript of "Marjory Gatkin."

"It is not in your usual handwriting; and it is signed F. Avalon, instead of Felicia Avalon," the keen-eyed inquisitor remarked.

"The explanation of that is——"

"Pardon me, Miss Avalon," the captain, interposed, quickly, "I require no explanation; it would be worse than impertinent in me to lead you into making explanations which you might subsequently repent of having made."

"I was about to make an explanation," Felicia rejoined, displaying for the first time during a humiliating and exasperating interview a slight degree of *hauteur*, "for my own satisfaction, rather than for yours."

"Of course, it will please me to attend to any

communication which you may make for such an object."

"When I first wrote to my London publishers, I did not wish them to detect my sex from my handwriting or my name. So I adopted the masculine style of penmanship which you see in that copy of my letter to them, and I only signed the initial letter of my Christian name. In doing so, I do not think I was guilty of any unfair artifice."

"The universal consent of mankind permits ladies to be practitioners of innocent artifice. But you must allow me to take possession of your very successful imitation of a man's handwriting."

In the fleeter compartment of the desk, Captain Darby found nothing which he cared to capture, with the exception of a pad of blotting paper.

The search, Felicia thought, must now have come to an end, when Captain Darby made a scarcely audible humming, and for a few seconds, whilst creating the faint purring noise, seemed to be considering whether he had accomplished

all that under the circumstances he ought to do for the discovery of criminatory articles.

"Let me see, this is an unusually large desk," the captain observed.

"A very large one for a lady," Felicia assented. "It was my father's."

"There must be more space in that upper compartment than I saw just now. It has a concealed chamber."

"To be sure it has," Felicia Avalon exclaimed, with guileless surprise at her own forgetfulness of one of her desk's principal and most unusual provisions. "The bottom of the compartment can be raised, and beneath it there is a secret place for especially valuable papers."

"So I thought," the Captain said, without any sign of astonishment, but with a tone of amusement and suspicion that brought the crimson of shame to Felicia's face, who saw that the military chief of the Quebec police suspected her of concealment.

"I forgot the secret receptacle because I never use it. It shall be opened for your satis-

faction, Captain Darby, but you will find nothing in it."

In another minute Felicia had emptied the upper chamber of the compartment, and had raised the false bottom, when, to her dismay, apparent in the death-like pallor that suddenly took possession of her countenance, and to the Captain's exultation, visible in the brightness of his keen, bead-like eyes, and in the triumphant smile that played over his Israelitish features, the hidden receptacle was found to be full of papers.

"Those papers cannot be mine," Felicia Avalon exclaimed, in a voice that agitation made unnecessarily loud and unmusically sharp. "I remember that I emptied out that secret compartment of my desk last spring, and since then I have never put so much as a slip of paper into it."

"Any how, it contains something now," the Captain remarked.

For a moment excitement got the better of Captain Darby's politeness, and in his transient

elation he was pleased to call the contents of the secret chamber "a rare find."

"In your sister's interest and in the interest of justice," the Captain continued, addressing Felix, to whom he had paid scarcely any attention during the search, "you had better, Mr. Avalon, take careful note of these papers, of which Miss Avalon avers that she knows nothing, though they are found in the most secret receptacle of the desk, which she was good enough to unlock for my convenience."

"I am attentively watching all that takes place," Felix replied, in the husky voice of a deeply outraged man doing his utmost to control his emotions.

"Let us see," the Captain continued, "we will make a clear space on the table for the exhibition of these articles."

Having cleared the requisite space, the military chief of the Quebec police exposed the several articles of "the rare find," describing each of them as he laid it on the table—"No. 1, a small folio of blotting-paper, covered with black morocco; No. 2, a packet of letter-paper,

the outer sheet of it inscribed with an epistle commencing 'My dear Bishop;' No. 3, remainder of a packet of envelopes, stamped on the verge, 'Smith & Hewetson, Montreal;' No. 4, an envelope directed to Miss Craigie, 16, Place d'Armes, the said envelope, duly prepared for postal transmission, containing an anonymous letter, written to inform Miss Craigie that a civil suit, recently settled in the Chief Justice's Court of Quebec by a compromise effected at the suggestion of Miss Craigie's counsel, Mr. Alfred Porson, had failed to effect the object of Miss Craigie, the plaintiff in the said suit, because Mr. Alfred Porson had been corruptly prevailed upon by Mr. John Hingeston, defendant in the suit, to betray his client's interests."

When Captain Darby had allowed his prisoner and her brother to examine each of the items of the important seizure, and had made an accurately-dated inventory of the several papers, he suggested that Felix would perhaps not object to append his signature to the inventory, in testimony that

it was a correct enumeration of the articles discovered in the secret chamber of his sister's desk. To which request Felix replied by writing at the foot of the inventory—"The articles to which the above writing refers were found by Captain Darby in the secret chamber of my sister's desk on the day above mentioned; but Miss Avalon asserted, at the time of their discovery, that they were not her property, and that she could not account for their appearance in her desk.—Felix Avalon."

"Allow me also, Captain Darby," Felicia Avalon observed, with the composure which had characterized her throughout the greater part of the search, "to add my written testimony to the correctness of the inventory."

"You had better not," replied the military chief of the Quebec police. "Whatever you write may be brought in evidence against you."

"If it were hereafter to appear that it would be to my interest to deny the correctness of the inventory," Felicia answered, "I should not make the false denial. Allow me, sir, to unite

with my brother in testifying to the exactness of your list."

"By doing so you can hurt no one but yourself," the Captain replied, as he indicated that the lady might please herself in the matter.

Whereupon Felicia wrote in her ordinary clear, fluent style of writing, on the paper which her brother had subscribed, "The articles to which the above list refers were unquestionably found in my presence by Captain Darby in the secret chamber of my writing-desk; but the articles are not my property, and I do not know by what means they were placed in my desk.—FELICIA AVALON."

"Is your search finished, sir?" she inquired of Captain Darby, when she had returned the inventory to him.

"Yes. It is possible that I shall have to make another search; but for the present I am satisfied," the officer responded. After a pause, he added, "In the rigid performance of my duty, I ought not to allow you, Miss Avalon, to leave my sight before your arrival at the Court-house.

But, during the interval, between the present moment and one o'clock, I will leave you without observation, so that you may compose and refresh yourself before our drive into Quebec."

"Thank you," Miss Avalon answered, sincerely grateful for an arrangement that would afford her a brief period of solitude, of which she stood in urgent need. "You have performed your duties, sir, with a considerateness and delicacy of which your prisoner is duly sensible. I will join you and my brother in the dining-room at one o'clock."

"As the proceedings in the Court-house," rejoined the considerate chief-constable, "will necessarily be very trying to your feelings and powers of endurance, I advise you not to forget to take some luncheon before we leave 'The Fairmead.'"

"I will try to follow your advice, Captain Darby, in that respect;—but *do* leave me now," Felicia Avalon implored, as she suddenly recognised her inability to maintain any longer the appearance of composure with which she had

hitherto concealed the torture of her mental agitations.

At one o'clock, just as the Fairmead carriage drew up before the chief entrance of the villa, Felicia Avalon appeared in the dining-room equipped for the drive, wearing her dark sable furs over the black, crape-trimmed raiment which she wore in token of her sorrow for her recent domestic bereavement.

"Martha had better come with us," Felix suggested, on seeing his sister unattended by her female servant.

"No—no—no," Miss Avalon answered, with evident emotion. "She would only trouble me. The good soul is in tears, for she feels that something terrible has happened, though she knows not what it is. I had not the courage to tell her that her mistress is charged with crimes that are false, or prove me to be the wickedest and vilest woman on the face of the earth."

So the two men and Captain Darby's prisoner made the short drive into Quebec without Felicia's faithful maid. On their way they stopped

for a minute at the offices of Messrs. Corbet and Wilkinson, and secured for the prisoner the attendance of her legal adviser at the Court-house.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES.

THOUGH Captain Darby had taken precautions that his prisoner should not be molested by a mob on her way from the Fairmead to the Court-house, Felicia Avalon on entering the Place d'Armes saw an unusual assemblage of idlers, whose presence in the open space before the Palace of Justice revealed to her that her ignominous position was already known to many of the inhabitants of Quebec. The gathering of loiterers numbered at least some three or four hundred persons, who crowded closely together on the steps and front area of the Court-house on the approach of the prisoner's carriage, in order that they might get a good view of her

as she passed from the vehicle to the building, where several of the magistrates of the city were already awaiting her arrival.

"I was afraid that your arrest would be noised abroad," Captain Darby observed to his prisoner, "before our arrival. But such a crowd as this need not alarm you. It is a fairly respectable crowd. Moreover, I ordered a strong body of my men to be at hand to give you all requisite protection."

"Surely I have no reason to apprehend violence?" Felicia Avalon inquired, an expression of vivid terror crossing her face.

"Not from this crowd," returned the military chief of police, "but if the Irish in St. John's and the Lower Town get intelligence of our proceedings, you will probably require a strong escort of my men to protect you on leaving the Court House. The populace is in a highly combustible condition, and ripe for a tumult; but you have no reason to fear an outbreak of violence from this little knot of loafers."

"Will *our* examination take place in open court?" Felix inquired of the chief constable,

who took occasion to remind him that he would not be put under examination.

"The inquiry, sir," the Captain remarked, "will concern your sister's proceedings. There is no charge against you."

"I shall none the less be on my trial. My sister's trouble is not more hers than mine. But will the examination take place in open court?"

"No. The magistrates have determined to hold their preliminary investigation in their private parlour; but the newspaper reporters will be admitted."

Another minute, and the sleigh rollers of the Fairmead carriage had stopped at the steps of the Court House, and Felicia saw the narrow avenue, preserved by a staff of policemen, along which she was required to pass through the dense crowd of curious spectators.

Beyond a hum of excitement and a few faint groans, the throng gave utterance to no expressions of feeling as the prisoner, leaning on her captor's arm, passed into the palace of Justice, followed by her brother, who was allowed to enter the magistrates' parlour, and be present

at any inquiry from which the general public were excluded.

On entering the large parlour, Felicia Avalon was received with one exceptional mark of respect by the fourteen or fifteen magistrates, who rose from their seats at the upper end of the long room on seeing Foxe Avalon's daughter brought before them to hear a grave criminal offence charged upon her. Sir Ronald Clavering, a courteous gentleman and one of the wealthiest merchants in Quebec, had been Foxe Avalon's most intimate friend; and when the chairman of the bench rose instinctively, on the appearance of the lady, the wretchedness of whose grand countenance accorded tragically with her woeful dress, the other members of the tribunal followed his polite example.

Arrangements for the accommodation of the prisoner were made expeditiously. After resuming his seat at the long table that stood across the upper end of the parlour, Sir Ronald invited her to take a particular chair, which Captain Darby placed near the round table in the body of the room, where the lawyers, ap-

pointed to take part in the inquiry, found room for their papers of instructions.

The preliminary proceedings of Canadian magistrates are never so tedious and protracted as corresponding inquiries in the London police courts. The Justices of the Peace for Quebec are accustomed to hear the prosecutor's charge, to receive enough evidence to justify them in regarding the accusation as an affair deserving further investigation, and then to send the case for trial with a summary promptness that would be reprehended in this country as indecently expeditious or grievously unjust. In London an accused person, in an important criminal inquiry, seldom receives his final acquittal or penal sentence until he has practically undergone two elaborate trials—one before a jury, another before the committing magistrate. In Quebec, magistrates, in dealing with charges, do not trouble themselves with subtleties of evidence, or give much thought to the consequences of hasty committals. It is enough for them, whilst acting as preliminary investigators, to withhold from higher tribunals such accusa-

tions as are distinguished by the most patent flimsiness and unreasonableness.

But even in London the consideration of Admiral Mullenger's accusation and the cogent evidence of the few witnesses, who supported it, would not have occupied many hours.

To the charges which were read with due formality it is needless to observe that Miss Avalon pleaded "not guilty."

Addressing succinctly Sir Ronald Clavering and the other magistrates of the bench, Mr. Alfred Porson, one of the most successful junior members of the Canadian bar, explained to them that he appeared in the behalf of Admiral Mullenger to prefer against Miss Felicia Avalon a charge of having written and published a defamatory libel, imputing immorality to the Admiral's wife and the very Reverend Monseigneur Hippolyte Rigaud, Catholic Bishop of Quebec. Before reading this libel and submitting it to the bench, Mr. Porson remarked that it was doubtless within the knowledge of the justices that, during the last few weeks, some person or persons had literally deluged the

society of their city with torrents of atrocious and revolting calumny. Scarcely a family of Quebec,—he might even say, scarcely an individual of note in the city,—had escaped the malice of the disseminator or disseminators of the anonymous slanders, of which every man in the capital, ay, and he blushed to say it, every woman also had received, or at least had seen, a specimen. The time had not arrived for him to give an opinion whether Miss Felicia Avalon was the sole author of these extraordinary calumnies. But it was in his power to demonstrate that the libel upon Mrs. Mullenger and Bishop Rigaud—a libel, be it observed, written on the same paper, and in the same handwriting, as all the other slanderous documents recently dispersed about Quebec that had come under his observation—was unquestionably posted by Miss Felicia Avalon at nine o'clock on the evening of the ninth instant, at the chief post-office of Quebec. He was, moreover, in a position to prove, from evidence that had not been in his hands many minutes, that the handwriting of the libel was identical with

the handwriting of certain papers which the police had seized in Miss Avalon's desk, and that the paper on which it was written, and the envelope in which it was transmitted through the post to Admiral Mullenger, were similar in every particular to certain rather peculiar paper and envelopes found in Miss Avalon's possession. He was in possession of a large mass of evidence, establishing other points that rendered it yet more certain that the prisoner was a fabricator and utterer of the abominable documents which had of late disturbed the peace of the best families, and aspersed with foul suggestions the fame of many honourable ladies, of Quebec. At the trial, which would inevitably ensue from the present proceedings at the next assizes, it would most likely be thought right to lay much of this revolting testimony before the jury; but on the present occasion Mr. Alfred Porson would merely demonstrate to the bench that Miss Avalon had unquestionably posted the libel on Mrs. Mullenger, and that there were the strongest grounds for believing her to be its

writer. On establishing these points, the counsel of the aggrieved lady would ask the bench to commit the prisoner for trial on a charge of having composed and published a malicious libel.

Richard Clarkson, the Postmaster of the Quebec post-office, after being duly sworn, testified that, exactly six weeks since, he was consulted by Captain Darby, chief constable of Quebec, respecting numerous libels that had been sent through the post office to certain inhabitants of the city. Captain Darby had shown the witness no less than eleven of these libels, all written in the same handwriting, and had requested him to devise some means for ascertaining what person or persons posted the letters. At first the postmaster experienced difficulty in executing the task assigned him. The unknown transmitter of the libels had sometimes posted the anonymous letters at the chief post-office, but the greater number of the defamatory papers had been posted at the district postal-offices of the city, or at the receiving-offices of stations some few miles distant from Quebec.

So that nothing might occur to warn the libeller that the police were on the alert to discover him, Captain Darby was very particular in instructing the witness that his operations for the detection of the malefactor should as far as possible be withheld from the knowledge of the subordinate servants of the post-office. It was thought better to give no instructions respecting the affair to the receivers at the district offices, lest they should use their information to the prejudice of justice. But from the day of his first intercourse with Captain Darby concerning the defamatory epistles, the witness and two other officers of the postal department had kept a continual watch over the letter-box of the central office, so that no letter in the libeller's handwriting should issue from the central office without their knowledge. Either he or one of his two coadjutors had kept guard night and day for weeks in the receiving-room of the central office, and had examined the exterior of every letter put into the box. For a fortnight their vigilance was futile; for though the libels sent through the post-office were

more numerous than before, none of them during that period were posted at the central office.

After that fortnight of vain watching, however, the libeller began to frequent the central office. Three of the looked-for letters were posted there during the evening of last December the 20th. After a lapse of two days, another of the same letters was posted at nine o'clock, P.M., December 22nd. From the last-named date, the witness or one of his assistants watched incessantly in a secret corner of the receiving-office, at a concealed peep-hole, so placed that it was impossible for anyone to post a letter at the slits of the receiving-boxes without coming under the watcher's observation. Between December 22nd and January 7th, no less than eight of the defamer's letters were posted at the office. Each of these letters was posted between eight P.M. and ten P.M., a time when the central office was rarely visited by any one in the winter season save its officials and the police. Each of these letters was posted on a separate night; each of them was

marked by the witness with a cross of red ink on its envelope at the right-hand corner immediately under the direction, and was then forwarded to its destination, of which the witness took care to keep a memorandum. Each of these letters was posted by a tall lady, wearing a dark dress and a considerable quantity of sable fur, and having her face concealed by a thick veil and a Canadian "cloud," after the fashion of Quebec ladies when offering themselves to the atmosphere of a winter's night. On each of these eight evenings the witness was watching at the peep-hole, when the lady, without attendant and with the inaudible tread of a walker wearing woollen snow-shoes, entered the arcade of the post-office, approached the receiving-box, hastily posted her letter and quickly retreated. The light of a lamp, placed directly over the panels of the letter-boxes, enabled the watcher to discern every external object of the lady's costume, but her veil and woollen cloud completely concealed her face. On the two first of her eight visits—the dates of which the witness gave precisely from entries

in his note-book—the lady was not watched after she had quitted the post-office; but on each of the six subsequent occasions of her coming to post a letter, she was followed by a detective policeman from the post-office to the residence of the late Miss Messurier, at the corner of St. Lewis and St. Ursule Streets. At that time Miss Avalon was residing in the house of her great-aunt. The detective, who had received instructions to watch this residence, would testify that, during Miss Messurier's illness, Miss Avalon was accustomed to leave her aunt's house every evening, and take walking exercise in the streets of Quebec. From information received from the detective, Benjamin Grady, and from his own observation of the lady's height and costume, the Post Master was satisfied that the person who posted the letters was Miss Avalon. It was, however, arranged that, should she make another nocturnal visit to the post-office, Benjamin Grady, after tracking her to the vicinity of Miss Messurier's house, should accost her, and ascertain whether she really was Miss Avalon. On the evening of the 9th

instant, she made a ninth visit to the post-office, when she posted the letter which contained the libel on Mrs. Mullenger. She was subsequently followed up Fort Street, across the Place d'Armes, and up St. Lewis's Street to the precinct of Miss Messurier's house. Having arrived at the entrance of Miss Messurier's residence, the lady paused for a few seconds, as though debating whether she should enter the dwelling or take more exercise. She then walked the whole length of St. Ursule Street, and was returning along the street when Benjamin Grady accosted her, and identified her as Miss Avalon. After she had been so identified, Benjamin Grady saw her open the gate of the small court which separated Miss Messurier's house from the street, and enter the premises of the deceased lady.

In answer to questions put to him by Mr. Corbet, the post-master certified that the libel on Mrs. Mullenger was unquestionably the letter posted on the 9th instant by the lady whom Benjamin Grady had traced to Miss Messurier's house. Mr. Clarkson described the precautions

he had taken for identifying the particular letter. Instead of being forwarded to the Admiral, the letter was retained by the post-master until the middle of the following day, when it was placed by him in the hands of the Admiral, who was summoned to the post-office to receive it. The Admiral received and opened the letter in the presence of Captain Darby, and after perusing the libel, under the observation of the witness and the chief-constable, showed it to them.

During his examination in chief, Mr. Clarkson was several times checked by Mr. Corbet, for stating matters beyond the bounds of his personal observation; but the bench requested the postmaster to tell his story in his own way.

Admiral Mullenger corroborated the postmaster's testimony, in so far as it concerned the circumstances under which the Admiral received the letter in the presence of the postmaster and the chief constable.

Benjamin Grady testified that he had watched Miss Avalon's proceedings during her residence

in the late Miss Messurier's house, that he had traced her on seven different occasions from the post-office to Miss Messurier's dwelling, and that to render his identification of her unassailably certain, he had accosted her on the night of the 9th instant in St. Ursule Street. To arrest her attention he had said, "Excuse me, Miss Avalon, this is a perilously cold night for delicate ladies to expose themselves to the air." Exhibiting no surprise at being thus addressed, Miss Avalon answered, "It is a cold night, but I am not a delicate lady, and I am so warmly wrapped, that I am in no danger of being frost-bitten." To which words, the witness replied, "Excuse me, madam, for making the suggestion that you would be safer indoors than abroad such a night as this. I hope you will excuse me, madam." Miss Avalon answered, "I must have a little fresh air, and I cannot get enough exercise in the small court before my aunt's house; but I thank you, sir, for your advice." The witness knew Miss Avalon's voice well, and was certain that the lady who spoke to him in St. Ursule Street was Miss Avalon, though her

face was so completely hidden by her veil and cloud that he could not discern its features. After speaking with Miss Avalon in the manner described, the witness saw her open Miss Messurier's outer gate with a key, and enter the premises of the deceased lady. Moreover, on leaving the post-office, Miss Avalon dropped accidentally a white pocket-handkerchief from her fur muff. This handkerchief, with the owner's initials worked in one corner, Benjamin Grady had picked up, and now produced.

In answer to questions put by Mr. Corbet, Benjamin Grady described the small court in front of the late Miss Messurier's house, as an area of about twenty feet by twenty feet, bounded on three sides by a wall nine-feet high, and furnished with a permanent roof over the paved pathway leading from the wall-door to the house-door. The witness had called the entrance into the court a gate, but it was a door as much as the entrance to the house itself was a door. It was impossible for anyone standing on the pavement at the corner of St. Lewis and St. Ursule Streets to see the door of the house,

or to see any part of the court, when the outer entrance was closed. As soon as she had entered the court, and closed the door behind her, Miss Avalon was invisible to him. He could not swear that she entered the house immediately after entering the court, but he presumed that she did so. The outer court of the late Miss Messurier's house, in fact, was an outer hall or vestibule; and having watched Miss Avalon till she entered it, the witness regarded himself as having seen her enter the residence where she was staying in consequence of her relative's illness.

Before Benjamin Grady was dismissed, Felicia Avalon asked leave to examine the handkerchief which he had produced. The article was handed to her by the clerk of the Justices, to whom, after she had looked at it, she returned the handkerchief, saying, as she did so, to the court, "The handkerchief is unquestionably my property. It is one that I lost rather more than twelve months since." Turning to Benjamin Grady she asked him, "Are you sure that it was I whom you saw in the arcade at the post-

office, and subsequently accosted in St. Ursule Street.

The man replied steadily, "Quite sure, Miss Avalon."

"You say that it was dark when you followed and spoke to me, and that my face was hidden by my veil and 'cloud,'—how then can you swear that I was the person whom you accosted?"

"I know your voice well, Miss Avalon, having often heard it at the Assembly Rooms and other places, where I am accustomed to attend on duty. Your voice is unlike every other female voice I have ever heard, it is soft like a woman's, and yet powerful like a man's. After speaking with you in St. Ursule Street, I followed you to your aunt's door, and saw you enter her house."

"Not the house,—you admitted that to Mr. Corbet," Felicia insisted. "You do not venture to say more than that you saw me enter the court."

"Which court," Sir Ronald Clavering interposed, "is in fact, as the witness very properly

observed, a part of the house which your aunt inhabited."

"Scarcely so, Sir Ronald," Felicia returned firmly and rather smartly. "An individual, personating me, and playing a bold game to mislead this constable, might have entered the court by means of a latch-key, and after eluding the policeman might have retired from Aunt Messurier's premises without rousing the attention of any individual of her household."

"Your suggestion is ingenious," returned Sir Ronald, as a look of sadness and incredulity—a look strongly expressive of prejudice against the prisoner—took possession of his countenance. "But I should advise you, Miss Avalon, to reserve your defence."

"Allow me, sir, to say a few words respecting the evidence of this most important witness."

"Say whatever you think right," returned the chairman; "but bear in mind that your words may hereafter be used in evidence against you."

"Gentlemen," Felicia Avalon observed, ad-

dressing the bench, "I do not question the honesty of the witness. He has given his evidence with every sign of sincerity and uprightness. But I assure you, on the honour of a gentlewoman for whose distress you must feel compassion, that he never saw me in the Arcade of the post-office, as he asserts, and that he never accosted me in St. Ursule Street, as he asserts. I admit that during Miss Messurier's last illness I used to leave her house for a few minutes every evening, to breathe the fresh air and take a little exercise——"

"Miss Avalon," exclaimed Mr. Corbet, springing to his feet, and raising both his hands imploringly in a vain attempt to silence his client, "I am here as your legal adviser, and I implore you not to make any statement respecting the charges brought against you, until you have consulted with me as to its probable effect on the court. I urge you most strenuously to act on Sir Ronald Clavering's advice, and to reserve your defence."

"It cannot injure me to tell the precise truth. To withhold any of the truth ought not to be of

service to me," Felicia returned with warmth. "Those who counsel me to make no indiscreet admissions assume that I have done what I should endeavour to conceal. But, gentlemen, as I am completely and utterly innocent of the offences charged upon me by my prosecutor and by scandalous rumour, I hope to vanquish my calumniators by a policy of candour and perfect openness. Allow me, then, Mr. Corbet, to continue the statement which you interrupted."

"You are free to act on your own judgment, Miss Avalon, if you think it more reliable than mine," Mr. Corbet returned in a huffish manner. "Anyhow, my conscience will acquit me of having omitted to give you proper advice."

"Don't be offended with me, sir," Felicia entreated graciously.

"I won't be offended with you," the lawyer answered; "but, if you will persist in trying to help yourself, you'll make it impossible for me to help you."

"Benjamin Grady is right in saying, gentlemen," Felicia Avalon observed, resuming her

statement after this contention with her legal adviser, "that I used to leave Miss Messurier's house in the evenings, for exercise in the streets when they were almost entirely deserted by the inhabitants of the city. But both he and Mr. Clarkson err in supposing that they saw me in the arcade of the post-office on the nights mentioned in their evidence. During my great-aunt's illness I never entered the arcade of the post-office, or even approached that building. The pavements of the Place d'Armes and Des Carrières Street, and the walks of the Castle Gardens, into which ground I used to admit myself by my private key, were the paths on which I made my solitary perambulations. I never, throughout the period of my last residence under Miss Messurier's roof, went nearer the post-office than Buade Street. Moreover the interview, which Benjamin Grady declares to have taken place between me and himself in St. Ursule Street, never did take place. The person whom he accosted in that thoroughfare, under the erroneous impression that he was addressing me, was not I. And if

the person whom he so accosted confirmed him in his misapprehension by pretending to be myself, and afterwards entered Miss Messurier's court, it is evident that this unknown person was desirous to personate me."

Having risen to make this speech, Felicia Avalon resumed her seat after delivering it not a little to her own injury and Mr. Corbet's dismay.

Sir Ronald Clavering asked if Miss Avalon had any witness at hand who could prove that, in her nightly and scarcely discreet perambulations of the public streets, she never approached the quarter where two very credible witnesses declared that they had seen her on the evenings under consideration.

To which inquiry Miss Avalon replied that, to her great regret, it was impossible for her to call any witness in support of her assertions that her walks had always been in places west of Buade Street. She had on each occasion left her great-aunt's house without her maid, in order that she might have the benefit of tranquil and solitary meditation, whilst she

took a little exercise, of which the distressing nature of her confinement and service in Miss Messurier's house put her in urgent need.

Whereupon Sir Ronald Clavering nodded his head three times, with a peculiar and sorrowful significance, and the other gentlemen of the bench—or, to speak accurately, the other gentlemen of the long line of horse-hair-covered chairs—shifted themselves on their seats, and made exchanges of sentiment by faint murmurs, scarcely audible grunts, and various more or less disfiguring movements of their eyelids and eyebrows, all which signs of interest and concurrence of feeling were summed up by the gentlemen of the press, plying their busy little pens at the lower end of the room, in the comprehensive expression, "Sensation in the court."

Benjamin Grady was re-called, and asked by the court whether he had ever, whilst watching Miss Avalon's perambulations, seen her walking in Des Carrières Street and the Castle Gardens. Whereto Benjamin Grady responded that he could corroborate Miss Ava-

lon's statement that she used to take solitary walks at night in those places. He had seen her walking in the Castle Gardens and also in the Public Gardens on the evenings of Miss Messurier's illness. He had also seen her in the arcade of the post-office, and other places, as stated in his evidence.

After he had been duly sworn, Captain Darby gave some evidence greatly prejudicial to the prisoner. He had himself seen her on three of the evenings mentioned in Mr. Clarkson's evidence enter the arcade of the post-office, and put a letter through one of the panels of the receiving-room. He had not accosted her, because the place where he watched her rendered it impossible for him to address her with effect. He was certain that the lady who posted the libel on Mrs. Mullenger was Miss Avalon, with whom he had for several years had the honour to be intimately acquainted. It was he who, whilst looking at Miss Avalon through a small peep-hole drilled in a panel of the receiving-room, picked the libel up directly it had fallen from her hand to the bottom of the receiving-

box. He was present at the post-office when the libel was put into Admiral Mullinger's hands, and he saw the words of the libel directly after Admiral Mullenger had perused them. Having humane regard to the critical condition of Miss Messurier, who was actually *in extremis* when Miss Avalon was conclusively identified as the publisher of the calumny, Admiral Mullenger had requested the chief of the police to take no proceedings against the prisoner until her aged relative had been interred. The witness had, however, on that morning searched Miss Avalon's writing-room for papers calculated to demonstrate her guilt even yet more conclusively. In a secret compartment of her desk—a part of her desk which the lady had appeared to wish to withhold from his inspection—the chief constable had found a libel, addressed to Miss Craigie, 16, Place d'Armes, which was written in the peculiar handwriting of the libel on Mrs. Mullenger, and of all the other defamatory publications which had recently caused commotion in Quebec. No person of ordinary intelligence and education would hesi-

tate to declare the libel on Mrs. Mullenger, and the libel addressed to Miss Craigie, and now produced before the court, to be in the same handwriting. The two libels were written on paper, and enclosed in envelopes, bought of "Smith and Hewetson, Montreal," some two years or rather more since, at which period Miss Avalon could be proved to have purchased a considerable quantity of stationery of those stationers. The witness also produced another specimen of the libeller's handwriting, taken that morning from the prisoner's desk—the first part of an unfinished letter, in the same feigned caligraphy, beginning with the words, "My dear Bishop." Another most criminatory article, seized in the hidden receptacle of the prisoner's desk was a blotting-folio, on the sheets of which were discernible brief passages from some of the most revolting of the libels, which had been disseminated broadcast over the city. Another scarcely less important seizure, which Captain Darby had made at the Fairmead, was a letter addressed to the London publishers of Miss Avalon's well-known

books. Written in a masculine style, this epistle was unquestionably the performance of Miss Avalon's pen; and its masculine penmanship, strikingly similar to, though not identical in every particular with, the caligraphy of the libels, pointed to the time when she first set about acquiring a masculine hand, unlike her ordinary handwriting. The witness had cautioned Miss Avalon to make no imprudent statement respecting this letter; but she had voluntarily, and in spite of his warning, avowed that it was her own fac-simile copy of a letter which she had written in the same masculine style to her London publishers, and that she had used the masculine penmanship to make them think that she was a man.

Before the inquiry, of which the foregoing pages are a brief summary rather than a fairly comprehensive report, had closed, daylight was at end, and the luxuriously heated parlour was illuminated by gas-burners, that added not a little to the warmth of the room.

And whilst Captain Darby was giving his evidence with a peculiar air of mingled non-

chalance and carefulness, the prisoner, by the strong light which fell upon the steadily hardening and most legible countenances of the magistrates, saw, to her humiliation and terror, that, far from deeming the preposterous charges to be utterly incredible, her judges were of one mind in thinking her guilty. Gradually Sir Ronald Clavering's face assumed a look of sternness and abhorrence in lieu of the sadness and pity observable in it at an early stage of the proceedings. A similar effect was produced on the features of every magistrate present. And when Felicia Avalon saw those severe, stony, damnatory faces, exhibited by the men who from her childhood had wooed her with praise and flattery and chivalric courtesy—the men who had been her father's congenial guests at the Fairmead, and whose daughters were her most intimate friends—she for the first time realized all the horrible perilousness and infamy of her position—knew that she had lost the world's honour and love, and was fast losing her hold on its compassion. Already she had fallen from the estate of the most admired and

popular gentlewoman of Quebec to the shameful condition of a woman charged with the perpetration of revolting and enormous crimes. A few weeks more, and perhaps—in spite of her innocence, and her consciousness of rightful motives for all the reprehensible acts of her generous career—she would have fallen yet lower, and be a convict in the gaol of her native city, undergoing a convict's punishment and sickening discipline, for crimes which she was incapable even of imagining, at the time when she was believed to have perpetrated them.

A giddiness and faintness came over her, which rendered her powerless to follow Captain Darby in the latter part of his evidence, or to give heed to the remarks with which Mr. Alfred Porson concluded the case for the prosecution. For a few minutes, which appeared as many hours to the agonized and panic-struck woman, she feared that she would lose consciousness, and by the display of weakness confirm her beholders in their belief in her guilt. With thankfulness she heard Mr. Corbet say something to the effect that it was not his intention

to make any remarks on the nature of the evidence, as it was his client's wish to give to her unknown persecutor no indication of the course of defence which she would take to clear herself of the imputations under which she suffered.

When Mr. Corbet had ceased to speak, there was a pause, during which the justices glanced at one another, and their clerk went about with messages sent by members of the bench to their chairman on slips of paper or whispered words.

After the pause, Sir Ronald Clavering committed Felicia Avalon to take her trial at the next assizes on charges of fabricating and publishing defamatory papers. Having done his utmost to dismiss, at the voice of duty, all emotions of pity for the prisoner, whom he had been brought to regard as an abominable culprit, Sir Ronald thought it right to express his especial detestation of the crimes with which she was charged, and to intimate that he was troubled by no doubts of her guilt. The worthy Baronet was no orator. It must be admitted by the candid historian that the worthy

Chairman of the Quebec Justices of the Peace fell into a rhetorical hobble when he informed Felicia Avalon that she had been taken red-handed in the attempt to blacken, with her dexterous fingers and itching palms, some of the whitest characters in Quebec. As the prisoner was aware (Sir Ronald observed), that afternoon's investigation was only a preliminary inquiry. On a future and no distant occasion she would have every opportunity and inducement to demonstrate her innocence. On the other hand, Admiral Mullenger, who had done Quebec a public service in thus unfurling the flag of chastity and truth against the legions of viperous calumny, would have every inducement to demonstrate the guilt of the person who had bespattered his domestic shrine with poisonous suggestions. His brethren of the Bench had co-operated with their chairman in examining the evidence produced by the prosecution merely with a view to ascertaining whether the case was one that ought to go to a jury. And they had no course open to them but to commit the prisoner, just as though she were an offender

of humble rank and mean associations, to take her trial at the next assizes.

Scarcely had Sir Ronald concluded his speech, to the manifest approval of the select audience that had refrained from smiling at its broken metaphors and other rhetorical absurdities, when Mr. Corbet ventured to assume that the court would admit the prisoner to bail.

In opposition to which entreaty Mr. Alfred Porson ventured to assume that the court would refuse the application for bail in the interests of justice, and in proper care for the numerous aggrieved persons who would suffer cruelly in reputation if the prisoner should avoid the ordeal appointed to decide the question of her guilt or innocence. It was far from Mr. Porson's wish that the Court should exhibit needless severity to the prisoner, but for obvious reasons he felt himself compelled to say that no amount and quality of bail would afford his client and the public such security as they were justified in asking.

The promptitude, with which Sir Ronald Cla

vering declared his concurrence in Mr. Porson's view of the requirements of the case, indicated that the chairman and his brethren of the Bench had predetermined that, on committing the prisoner to trial, they would not afford her an opportunity of escape.

Having due consideration to the prisoner's affluence, the power of her private connections, and the perilous agitation of society, Sir Ronald Clavering announced that the court could not accord to Miss Avalon a privilege which the Bench would not for a moment think of according to an offender of inferior condition.

For a few moments Felicia Avalon could scarcely credit the testimony of her ears. Had it already come to this, that she was a prisoner, with no prospect of regaining her liberty on any terms, until a jury had acquitted her of the crimes laid to her charge, or until she had endured ignominious punishment allotted to her by judicial sentence as the proper penalty of offences of which she was as innocent as a newborn babe?

"Sir Ronald—Sir Ronald," she ealculated,

as she rose from her seat, and advanced with unsteady steps towards the magistrates' table, when she had recovered from the first shock of her surprise at the refusal of bail, "you will not —you cannot send me to prison to-night!"

"In refusing bail, madam," Sir Ronald answered firmly, but not without politeness and a slight show of returning tenderness, "we do what is best for you, as well as best for the public. The most dangerous excitement prevails in Quebec. Whilst we have been sitting here, a large crowd has assembled in the Place d'Armes before the Court-house, and if the multitude were to hear that we had shown you any favour, I would not answer for the peace of the city. On hearing that you are committed, and on your way to prison, the assembly will disperse quietly. But should we allow you to go free on bail, there would be a riot, on the part of the poorer Irish and other catholics, who are inexpressibly infuriated by the libels which they believe you to have published on their clergy."

"Then I am content to go to prison at once. Sir Ronald," Felicia Avalon answered, meekly,

and with an unexpected air of gratitude for an arrangement which, two or three minutes earlier, had filled her with consternation. "Think only of the poor people, Sir Ronald. My fate is of no moment in comparison with the public good."

Having thus intimated her approval of the magistrates' treatment of her, Felicia Avalon bowed to the bench, and then turning round, extended her right hand as though it sought the gaoler appointed to lead her to prison.

In another moment, just as the lights of the parlour appeared to her to be strangely agitated and all the persons in the council-chamber seemed to be speaking at the same time, for the mere purpose of making a Babel's clamour, she fell to the ground, without cry or moan, in a fainting-fit, from which she was not readily restored.

"She has fainted," several of the magistrates exclaimed, as, forgetful of their dignity, they rose from their chairs, and ran towards the unconscious lady.

"Don't disturb yourself, Sir Ronald," Captain

Darby observed, with unruffled equanimity. "The gaoler is in the room, and his wife is at hand. Miss Avalon will have all the attention that her case requires. It is either a genuine fainting-fit, or a seasonable piece of decidedly clever acting."

CHAPTER XXII.

ON TRIAL.

THOUGH the ways in which the people of Quebec displayed their interest in the legal proceedings against Felicia Avalon cannot be commended for good taste or for charity to the prisoner, I am inclined to think the society of the colonial capital did not thereby prove itself inferior in refinement or generosity of temper to the inhabitants of the mother-country. If a young and beautiful woman, belonging to one of the highest families of the aristocracy, and moving in a choice Belgravian circle, were to be indicted at the Old Bailey on the charge of writing and publishing malicious libels on many of the most illustrious personages of the land,

it is certain that on the day of her trial there would be a significant movement of coronetted carriages from the western quarters of the town towards a certain narrow street of "the city;" and that people of the highest fashion and of both sexes would struggle to gain admittance to the scene of the scandalous investigation. It is more than probable that *cartes de visite* of the illustrious criminal would be conspicuous in the shop-windows of dealers in photographs, that her portrait would appear in illustrated newspapers, and that the book-stalls would offer for sale memoirs of her experiences and doings. It reflects, therefore, no especial discredit on colonial manners and tone that the *cause célèbre*, in which Felicia Avalon played the part of the fair criminal, became the engrossing topic of Canadian dinner-parties and drawing-rooms, and that upon the occasion of her public trial the largest chamber of the Quebec Court-house was thronged with men and women who would under ordinary circumstances have disdained to participate openly in the vulgar excitement of a criminal inquiry.

Nor can it be urged, to the shame of the ladies and gentlemen who found pastime in witnessing the humiliation of Foxe Avalon's daughter, that their presence in the galleries and body of the chamber of justice added greatly to the prisoner's anguish. Before she was required to exhibit herself in the dock, and plead "not guilty" to several counts of an indictment which had been greatly expanded and amended in the interval between her committal and the opening of Assizes, Felicia Avalon had grown callous to scorn and almost indifferent to obloquy. The blows, which a relentless fate had administered to her in quick succession, had so far deadened her pride and sensitiveness that, on appearing before the jury, sworn to try her according to the evidence adduced against her, she could gaze without emotion at the grave, passionless face of her old friend and admirer, Chief-Justice Slingsby; at the twelve jurors, to each of whom she had been personally known from her childhood; at the crowded benches of the Grand Jury, where she recognized several of her most intimate female acquaintances, sitting

amongst magistrates and other colonial dignitaries, with whom it had been her wont to associate on terms of affectionate familiarity; at the semicircular seats, assigned to the members of the Canadian bar, on which room had been found for some of the principal officers of the Quebec garrison, with whom she had waltzed to the music of many an Assembly Ball; and at the eager, curious, cruel faces that looked down upon her from high galleries, stared upwards at her from the avenues and lowest floors of the great hall, and encompassed her with gleaming lines of resentful and indignant eyes.

In whatever direction she looked, she saw persons more or less familiar to her,—tradesmen at whose stores she had for years been an affable customer; poor women thirsting for her condemnation, though she had aided them in time of trouble with money and Christian counsel; ladies who, twelve months before, had deemed themselves fortunate when she promised to come to their parties; barristers, soldiers, men of science, notabilities of the Canadian Parliament, to whom she had shone as the brightest

star of British-American society. The Chief Justice could recall the time when he used to take her on his knee, examine her as to her progress in the school-room, and tell her jocularly that if she made such rapid advances in learning, there would be nothing left for her to study when she should come to be ten years old. The Attorney-General, who conducted the case for the prosecution, had been talked of as an aspirant for her hand. Mr. Alfred Porson, Sir Luke Patterson's junior, (N.B., the Attorney-General had recently returned from England with the distinction of knighthood), had been a frequent visitor at the Fairmead from the time when Foxe Avalon had strenuously and successfully exerted himself to secure some powerful clients for the then untried advocate. But nowhere did Felicia Avalon's vision encounter a spectator whose appearance in the densely thronged assembly caused her to tremble, or change colour, or evince any kind of agitation. She neither blenched nor flushed when she saw Major Tilbury—the man whom she knew to be the cause

of all her ignominy and wrongs—sitting in the middle of the court, by the side of the attorney for the prosecution.

Though the usages and traditions of the Canadian law-courts are opposed to prolixity of procedure, Felicia Avalon's trial occupied three entire days. The inquiry concerned itself chiefly with the libel on Mrs. Mullenger and Bishop Rigaud; but to demonstrate that this was nothing more than a specimen of the calumniator's prolific industry, and that its author was to be credited with the fabrication of the other defamatory papers which had roused the universal indignation of the colony, the managers of the prosecution had framed their indictment so as to enable them to examine many witnesses who took no part in the preliminary investigation, and so as to bring under the consideration of the court the contents of several slanderous compositions, together with the circumstances of their publication. There is, however, no need, for the purposes of this narrative, to put upon its pages all the tedious details of an inquiry whose minuter points and accessory re-

velations the intelligent reader may be left to imagine for himself.

Sifted and examined by all the processes and tests which human ingenuity has devised for the scrutiny of evidence, the testimony of Felicia Avalon's guilt appeared conclusive to the judge, jury, and public opinion. It was demonstrated that the libels, which obviously proceeded from a person extremely familiar with Quebec and the social antecedents of its inhabitants, were written in a handwriting which the most celebrated "experts" of America had no hesitation in declaring to be Miss Avalon's hand-writing, disguised so as to appear the work of a masculine scribe. This unanimous opinion of the "experts" was corroborated in a remarkable way by the letter addressed to Messrs. Hobson and Holliday, publishers, 15, Sackville Street, London; the facsimile, which was certainly the prisoner's work, of a letter that she had sent to those publishers. The police had discovered at the Fairmead a stock of the rather peculiar paper and envelopes used by the libeller; and Messrs. Hewetson and Smith, the stationers of Mont-

real, testified that the paper and envelope so seized were unquestionably bought by the prisoner at their shop in Montreal some two years since. Yet further, in the private receptacle of Miss Avalon's writing-desk—a place where it was most improbable that anyone save herself could have put any of the criminatory articles—the police had discovered the libel on Mr. Alfred Porson, addressed to Miss Craigie, and ready for publication—a paper altogether corresponding with the rest of the libeller's performances. There was also the blotting-folio, whose sheets certified that it must have been one of the tools of the wholesale manufacturer of written slander. All this was circumstantial evidence, but it was circumstantial evidence of the strongest kind. Suppose the case of the wholesale utterance of a peculiar kind of false coin. Suppose that the police discovered in the secret closet of a hitherto well-reputed person the dies and other machinery unquestionably used in the manufacture of false money. Suppose also that the police discovered in the same hiding-place, to which none but the well-

reputed person had access, a store of false money, moulded and stamped and ready for utterance, would any jury hesitate to convict the person, in whose possession the spurious money and forger's implements were found, of the crime of counterfeiting and uttering false coin? But the evidence in such a case would be weaker than the circumstantial evidence against Felicia Avalon, in whose most secret drawer was discovered a defamatory paper which, in the opinion of the best judges of caligraphy, must have been the work of her own hand.

Had the case against her consisted entirely of circumstantial evidence, it would have necessitated a conviction, in the total absence of refutatory testimony. But the direct and positive evidence of the witnesses who had seen Miss Avalon perform the very act of publication was conclusively demonstrative of her guilt. Captain Darby, Mr. Clarkson, and Benjamin Grady saw her on different occasions post libels at the chief post-office. The libel on Mrs. Mullenger and Bishop Rigaud had literally dropt from the prisoner's hand to within an inch of the right

hand of Captain Darby, who was certain that the poster of the defamatory letter was Miss Avalon, and no other person. Mr. Clarkson, who knew the prisoner well—her height, air, style, and the rich furs that were an important feature of her costume—was no less certain that the tall lady, who had repeatedly entered the arcade of the post-office with silent tread, was no other person than Felicia Avalon. When she had posted the libel on Mrs. Mullenger and the Catholic bishop, the prisoner was followed by the detective, Benjamin Grady, who spoke with her in St. Ursule Street. Thoroughly familiar with the prisoner's peculiar voice, Benjamin Grady knew the lady to be Miss Avalon, from the intonations of her speech no less than from other circumstances. Benjamin Grady had been for successive days, or rather successive evenings, keeping a close watch on Miss Avalon's movements, and he was certain that the woman whom he accosted in St. Ursule Street, on the night of the 9th of January, was the same lady whom he had followed on that evening from the post-office, and had seen repeatedly come out

from and re-enter Miss Messurier's residence. After speaking with Miss Avalon in St. Ursule Street, Benjamin Grady had seen her enter Miss Messurier's house.

Controlled by such evidence, even if they had been altogether innocent of prejudice against the prisoner, whom they regarded as the diabolical maligner of inoffensive persons before they had heard a word of the Attorney-General's opening speech, the twelve jurors would necessarily have come to the conclusion that she was the libeller.

Against such testimony, what could her counsel urge in her defence?

Of what avail was it that Felicia Avalon knew that she had never written a line of the libels, that she had never walked a single step nearer than Buade Street in the direction of the post-office on the nights when she was represented to have posted the letters; that she had never been accosted by Benjamin Grady in St. Ursule Street; that the criminatory papers found in her desk must have been placed there by the contrivance of the person whose machi-

nations had placed her in the dock to answer a criminal charge? She was at no loss how to account for the appearances which to others seemed to be conclusive evidence of her guilt. A few months since she had, so far as she knew, only one enemy in all the world, but that one implacable adversary had succeeded in converting into enemies all those persons on whose love and knowledge she had relied for deliverance from his arts. It was Major Tilbury who had imitated her handwriting in the anonymous letters, so as to make them appear the performances of her hand, feigning a masculine penmanship. It was he who composed them, so that their very diction should furnish testimony of her guilt. It was he who had directed public suspicion to her during the long weeks of her total ignorance of the causes of her unaccountable unpopularity. It was he who, having raised the clamour against "The Mother Country," had induced her fellow-citizens to believe that she was inspired with a passionate delight in malicious satire, and under the influence of a morbid appetite for the slanderer's excitement

was defaming in anonymous letters the people whom she had previously calumniated in a satirical novel. It was he who by some means had put the criminatory documents in the secret bottom of her writing-desk. To achieve the complete triumph of his designs, he had personated her, assuming a dress which should mislead the police, whom he had put upon her track, and cause them, while watching him, to believe that they were watching her. The person who had posted letters in the arcade of the post-office, under the very eyes of the officials who were his dupes, was Major Tilbury himself. The individual whom Benjamin Grady had accosted in St. Ursule Street was no other than her adversary, disguised so as to pass in the darkness for her; and when he had imposed on the honest but by no means sagacious policeman, he had ventured with an almost admirable daring to enter the outer court of Miss Messurier, and perfect his deception by leading the watcher to infer that he had entered the deceased lady's residence.

All this Felicia saw; but she was powerless

to prove that Major Tilbury had been guilty of any one of the acts which were to his victim the evidences of the course that he had taken. The very light by which she had discovered his achievements was the light of the knowledge of her own innocence,—in which innocence no man in all Quebec, with the single exception of her brother, believed. When she had made to Mr. Corbet her statement of Major Tilbury's proceedings, the lawyer smiled incredulously in her face, and did not conceal his opinion that she was speaking under the influence of delusion, or with a highly reprehensible design. For several minutes she was so incensed with the solicitor for declining to believe what he was pleased to call her "wild story," that she declared to Felix her determination to do without legal advice, rather than take it from one who could believe her capable of the crimes charged upon her. If Mr. Corbet believed in her innocence, he would see nothing incredible in her mode of accounting for the appearances against her. Whereupon Mr. Corbet urged her to bear in mind that it was his business to

consider the effect which the statement would have on the minds of persons who, if not thoroughly convinced of her guilt, were very far from thinking her innocent. "At the best, Miss Avalon," the lawyer insisted, "your statement is a theory by which you account for a series of most damnatory circumstances; but, unfortunately, the only facts by which the theory is supported are Major Tilbury's animosity against you, and your own knowledge of your innocence. Your knowledge of your own innocence is a matter of which a jury can take no cognizance. Major Tilbury's enmity to you, even if you could demonstrate it, is of itself quite insufficient to prove him guilty of the extraordinary frauds and crimes which you charge upon him. If for your defence you were to offer this bare theory, it would only confirm a jury in their belief of your guilt. A jury would only say, 'This lady, after deluging Quebec with written slander, concludes with a spoken slander whose dimensions and daring render all her previous defamatory utterances comparatively insignificant.' The

theory may be of use to you, as a light by which you may discover facts—such facts as a jury can take cognizance of. But at present your theory has produced nothing but assumptions. Where are your facts?" And Felicia Avalon was compelled to admit that she had no facts wherewith to support her theory, and that a jury, who disbelieved her innocence, would not be likely to accept the conclusion to which her knowledge of her own innocence and Major Tilbury's malevolence had brought her.

Nor was Mr. Corbet in any degree successful in his endeavours to ascertain any facts that would justify him in propounding to a jury his client's theory respecting the causes of her calamitous situation. And his lack of success was not surprising; for when Felicia Avalon's suspicions of Major Tilbury were first made known to the lawyer, the time had already passed for the adoption of measures that, taken at any earlier stage of her enemy's proceedings against her, might have resulted in his detection.

But though Felicia Avalon's theory of her

case was so utterly unsupported by evidence producible in court, that to have publicly charged Major Tilbury with the fabrication of the libels would only have incensed public sentiment yet more fiercely against his victim, Mr. Harrowby cautiously availed himself of her suggestions in the ingenious, but altogether effectless, speech which he delivered in her behalf to a strongly-prejudiced jury.

Admitting that the evidence against his client was strong, Mr. Harrowby—the member of the Quebec bar whose eloquence Mr. Corbet had secured for the prisoner—urged that, after all, it was not conclusive, and nothing but the surest testimony would justify the jurors in delivering a verdict that would consign to ignominious punishment and perpetual infamy a lady who, until the occurrence of the incidents that had covered her with suspicion and obloquy, had possessed the admiration and love of her fellow-citizens. The greater part of the testimony was circumstantial—cogent without doubt, but still of a kind of evidence that was notoriously delusive. The prisoner's plea of

"Not Guilty" was no mere formal declaration of innocence, no cautious expression of a wish that the prosecution should prove its ability to demonstrate her guilt, but an indignant repudiation of unutterably revolting accusations; and in estimating the value of that fervent denial, the jury was bound to give full consideration to the prisoner's past character—to the amiability and goodness that had distinguished her from infancy to the date when untoward circumstances conspired to make her fellow-citizens suspect her of perpetrating execrable crimes. There were characters for whom he should not be justified in demanding so large a measure of charitable and sympathetic consideration from the jury. But the men whom he addressed could not close their eyes and their hearts to the fact that the charges preferred against the prisoner were absolutely irreconcilable with her nature. From childhood she had been known for truthfulness, generosity, munificence to the poor, and sweetness of disposition. Evidence which would justify a jury in attributing guilt to a prisoner

of bad or doubtful antecedents was insufficient for the condemnation of Colonel Foxe Avalon's daughter. The jury would not be justified in returning a verdict against the prisoner, if any single credible theory of her case was compatible with a belief in her innocence. If the jurors saw that it was barely possible for the strong appearance of her guilt to be, after all, nothing more than strong appearance, they would decline to declare that the child of their cherished friend, Foxe Avalon—the woman of whose goodness they were in possession of a countless number of incontestable proofs—had surpassed in malignity and wickedness the worst of her sex.

Mr. Harrowby had the courage to maintain that there was a theory of the prisoner's case—a theory strange and difficult for the jury to receive, but still much less incredible than the accusations brought against her—which was compatible with her innocence. If the jurors assumed that she was innocent—an assumption which it was their duty to make until she had been conclusively proved to be guilty—they

must at the same time believe that the appearances of her guilt were the result of an enemy's contrivance. The numerous circumstances that had aroused general suspicion against Miss Avalon, and afforded the Attorney-General the materials for his cogent arguments in behalf of the prosecution, could not have been the result of accident. The doctrine of chances forbade them to suppose that so many prejudicial circumstances had come about without the existence of some agent, or agents, industriously plotting and toiling to achieve the prisoner's destruction. If Miss Avalon were innocent, the incidents, which clothed her with revolting suspicions, must have been the work of an enemy—a crafty, resolute, unscrupulous, daring foe—who, to achieve his diabolical purpose, had roused social animosity against the lady by putting unfair constructions on the satire of her famous novel, and had subsequently contrived to place her in the dock, charged with crimes of which no evidence would have induced the people of Quebec to believe her guilty, had not their passions been roused against her

by unfair comments on certain indiscreet parts of her clever book. This enemy, proceeding with his Satanic work, had concocted and dispersed the libels of which she was accused of being the author, and had so composed and distributed them that they had inflamed the most dangerous passions of the inhabitants of Quebec, and had convinced them that their barbarous calumniator was a lady from whose lips no living person had ever heard an unwomanly or un-Christian sentiment. The unknown foe had personated Miss Avalon, imitating her voice and dress so successfully as to impose on the most vigilant of the Quebec police. Some of the letters, which he had himself posted, were posted under circumstances which induced some of the strongest witnesses for the prosecution to suppose that they were posted by Miss Avalon. He had furtively introduced into the most secret receptacle of her desk the articles which the Attorney-General had asked the jurors to regard as evidence that the atrocious libels of the still undiscovered defamer had proceeded from the private study of an accomplished and

gracious gentlewoman. To fix still more conclusively on his victim the atrocities of which she was innocent, this infamous calumniator and bold personator, whilst the eyes of the police were upon him—whilst he knew them to be upon him—had entered the outer court of Miss Messurier's house when that lady was actually dying, and the prisoner was in dutiful attendance on her expiring relative. If, instead of allowing the personator to leave him in St. Ursule Street, Benjamin Grady had arrested him on the spot where their conversation took place, the poster of the libel on Mrs. Mullenger and Bishop Rigaud would have been discovered to be a very different person from the prisoner in the dock. But unfortunately a merciful sentiment, highly honourable to Admiral Mullenger, but cruelly disastrous in its effects on the speaker's client, had determined the chief mover in the prosecution to refrain from public proceedings against Miss Avalon until her aged relation should have expired and been interred. Benjamin Grady was, therefore, instructed not to arrest the individual in woman's clothing, whom

his superiors believed to be Miss Avalon, but only to follow her wherever she went about the city. The personator was therefore permitted to confirm the suspicions and misconceptions of his watcher, by entering the outer court of Miss Messurier's dwelling, even as Miss Avalon was accustomed to enter it on her return from her nightly walks in the Castle Gardens. Benjamin Grady, a most honest witness, did not venture to assert that the person with whom he had conversed in St. Ursule Street entered Miss Messurier's dwelling-house—the high wall that bounded the court on three sides having precluded him from seeing whether the individual, supposed to be Miss Avalon, effected a passage through the inner door. Having remained at his post of observation at the corner of St. Ursule and St. Lewis Streets a minute or two longer, Benjamin Grady went home. It was most unfortunate for Miss Avalon that the honest constable did not return in time to see the personator shortly after sneak out of the court, and proceed, with the silent steps of a lady wearing snow-shoes, to his proper habitation.

This was the advocate's theory of his client's case. It was *her own* theory. It was the only way by which she could account for the facts on which the prosecution relied for a conviction. There was a lamentably total absence of such legal evidence as could support this view of the prisoner's position. But the theory, unsustained by evidence, was more credible than the not conclusively proved charge that heretofore the prisoner—universally esteemed as an amiable and virtuous gentlewoman—left the bedside of a dying relative, to commit to the post a number of atrocious libels on her intimate friends, after having busied herself for weeks, and even for months, in the manufacture and dispersion of disgusting slanders.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VERDICT AND SENTENCE.

HAD any person in court, possessing a clue to the real cause of Felicia Avalon's disgrace, watched Major Tilbury's countenance whilst her advocate described in clear, cutting language the clandestine doings of her hypothetical enemy, he would not have failed to detect manifestations of guilt in the visage of that manly officer of artillery, whose face assumed a livid paleness, whilst his features were changed so as to be scarcely recognizable, under the agonizing apprehensions of immediate detection which the speech for the defence occasioned in a mind conscious of its own detestable wickedness. But to no one in all the crowded assembly was the major an object of interest at the

time when his agitation was most repulsively apparent. Mr. Corbet was fully occupied in watching for an opportunity when he might assist his client by making a suggestion to her counsel. Felicia Avalon had forgotten her adversary's presence in the intensity of the concern with which she listened to every word uttered in her behalf by her skilful defender. Throughout Mr. Harrowby's statement of his theory of the prisoner's case, those of his auditors who moved their eyes from him did so in order that they might scrutinize the looks of the woman for whose benefit he dared to propound an astonishing series of hypotheses. Fortunately for himself, therefore, Major Tilbury escaped the observation which would have aggravated his disturbance, and might even have resulted in the exposure of his iniquity. No one saw the cold, huge drops of perspiration that mental torture brought to the surface of his forehead, whilst he dreaded that the lawyer's statement of a theory would be followed by a statement of facts, sustained by sure testimony, that would liberate Felicia

Avalon from his toils, and exhibit him in his true character to the infuriated populace.

His torture, however, was scarcely less short than sharp; and his heart once again beat freely, and his visage resumed its customary appearance, when Mr. Harrowby concluded the first part of his address to the jury by admitting that his theory was only a theory, and that, to his regret, he was unable to convert its hypotheses into demonstrations. Re-assured and comforted by this admission, Major Tilbury derived positive satisfaction from the orator's words, that assigned the suggestion of the theory to the prisoner herself. It pleased the vindictive defamer of the helpless woman, and of the whole city that was visiting his iniquities upon her, to know that she perceived the real nature of her position, and was aware that her miseries were punishments of his infliction. Nor was he hurt by aught else that came from her defender's lips. He even chuckled with secret glee when Mr. Harrowby concluded his appeal to the resentful jurors by urging that, even if they could not avoid the conclusion that the

prisoner had actually performed the deeds imputed to her, they must at least be of opinion that acts, so repugnant to her well-known nature, and so discordant with every quality of her womanly disposition, could not have been executed by her whilst in the full possession of her faculties and in a condition of health that would justify them in regarding her as accountable for her flagitious conduct.

Sir Archibald Slingsby's summing-up was brief, lucid, and strong against the prisoner, for whom, as the Chief-Justice remarked, her clever counsel could literally urge nothing, save that either she was mad when she committed the crimes of which she was accused, or that all the strong appearances of her guilt were the results of the diabolical contrivances of a mysterious and undetected foe, who had fabricated and published hundreds of criminal libels, and then managed to fix the guilt of his atrocious compositions on an inoffensive lady. What testimony had been advanced in support of these suggestions of madness and malicious

contrivance? Absolutely nothing. For the theory that some enemy, bent on Miss Avalon's destruction, was the real cause of the crimes charged upon her, the lady's counsel frankly admitted that it was a theory unsustained by a single particle of evidence. To support the theory of insanity the counsel had not ventured to call a single witness, of the medical profession or any other vocation, to demonstrate that Miss Avalon had ever exhibited any signs of the slightest tendency to mental derangement. One thing was certain, that at the time when the libels attributed to her pen were written and published, Miss Avalon was in the enjoyment of all her natural mental faculties, and was actively employed then in pursuit of her ordinary interests. Such a defence might extort applause for the advocate's ingenuity and eloquence, but, in a legal sense, it was no defence at all. It might serve the exigencies of a novelist, but it could not affect the difficulties of a person in Miss Avalon's painful position.

Having taken the unusual course of examin-

ing the speech for the defence, before analyzing the case for the prosecution, the Chief-Justice gave a very clear and concise summary of the facts by which the Attorney-General fixed upon Miss Avalon the guilt of fabricating and dispersing the libels. Against those facts nothing of fact had been urged with a view to discredit them, beyond Miss Avalon's reputation for the possession of amiable qualities. By all means let Miss Avalon have the full benefit of that reputation. It was a fact which of course the jury would not overlook. They must consider also the facts given in evidence, according to which they were sworn to deliver their verdict, and they must decline to be influenced by mere theories.

The jury did not retire to consult together after hearing the judge's summing-up. Every man of the twelve had made up his mind about the evidence before Sir Archibald had given them a word of direction, and knew that his eleven brethren agreed with him. Ay, more, the twelve jurors, vehemently incensed againt the accused person, and thoroughly conversant

with the testimony long ere it had been submitted to their official consideration, had determined to give a verdict of guilty before they entered the Court-house on the first day of the trial. And nothing had transpired during the investigation, or come from the Chief-Justice's lips, to make them falter in the execution of their purpose. For appearances' sake, however, they closed together in their box, and conferred with one another for three or four minutes in whispers. During which brief period Felicia Avalon, though she had no hope of a favourable decision, regarded them intently, and was deaf to the buzz and hum of excitement that arose from every bench and corner of the Chamber of Justice. She was not more heedless of the noise than unobservant of the heartless coolness with which the ladies in the grand-jury box and the reserved gallery levelled their opera-glasses at her, in order that they might scan the working of her features at the supreme crisis of the ordeal. Another minute;—the crier of the court demanded "silence" in tones followed by death-like stillness; and, in reply to the

question whether the jury had agreed upon their verdict, the foreman declared in a distinct voice, "Our verdict is—Guilty! Guilty on all the counts!"

Guilty! The word, though she had anticipated it as inevitable, caused Felicia Avalon's heart to leap to her throat, and after flushing it with transient crimson, imparted to her face an ashy whiteness that was highly interesting to the ladies with the opera-glasses. Everyone in court had known for days, had known ere the trial began, what the verdict would be; and yet it afforded them a satisfaction that was not devoid of a sensation akin to pleasurable surprise.

A brief pause, whilst the Chief-Justice moved in his seat, and placing his hands on his desk, looked steadily at the prisoner, who regarded him with equal steadfastness.

Throughout the investigation Sir Archibald Slingsby had exhibited to Felicia Avalon the courtesy of forbearing to address or mention her as "the prisoner." Until she was found guilty, his old friend Foxe Avalon's daughter

had been spoken of by the Chief Justice as "Miss Avalon." But the decision of the jurors gave her a character and infamous status which the president of the court was bound to recognize. The prisoner at the bar had heard the verdict. Had she anything to say why the court should not proceed to pass sentence upon her?

In a voice that was tragically impressive, and audible throughout the hall, though it never rose much above the speaker's loudness in animated conversation—a voice that is recalled at the present time with mournful reflections by many of those who listened to it without a single emotion of pity, Felicia Avalon said:—

"Sir Archibald Slingsby, I have no word to say against the witnesses who have given testimony to my undoing, or against the gentlemen of the jury, who have unquestionably discharged their duty in giving a verdict according to the evidence. I have nothing to say why the law should forbear to sentence me to the punishment appropriate to persons convicted of the heinous offences against human and divine precepts of which I have been convicted. And

yet I would speak a few words—in no hope of winning your compassion, in no desire to obtain a mitigation of the doom assigned to such a criminal as I appear to be, in no expectation of being able to weaken the universal belief in my guilt, but in justice to myself. It is incumbent on me, who never spoke false word of a single human creature, to be strictly truthful with respect to myself. I should deceive the world if by my silence I induced it to suppose that I admitted the justice and absolute truth of a decision which I regard as an honest verdict, and the necessary consequence of the proceedings of the last three days. My able counsel, for whose zeal and eloquence I am profoundly thankful, somewhat exceeded his obligations, and pained me, when he argued that, if I perpetrated the crimes laid to my charge, I must have committed them at a time when mental derangement rendered me unaccountable for my own actions. I have never been of unsound mind. I fear that the Almighty will see fit to continue to preserve to me all my mental faculties. But Mr. Harrowby did me nothing more

than justice when he declared that there was a reasonable view of my case which was compatible with a belief in my innocence. His theory of my case—a theory in which he possibly does not believe in his private judgment, though he urged it with admirable skill as my counsel—is the true statement of my case, in so far as my consciousness of innocence and my private knowledge enable me to discern the causes of my humiliation. I am aware that any assertion that I may make of my innocence will only rouse smiles of incredulity, and exasperate the animosities which have been provoked against me. I do not need to be told that any such assertion is at variance with apparently conclusive evidence; but still I do declare that I am in no way whatever guilty of the crimes for which I am about to receive further punishment. Sir Archibald, I have heard of a wise man—a mathematician, I think he was—who said concerning one of his scientific conclusions, 'This is contrary to all experience, and yet it is true.' I say the same respecting my assertion of my innocence, which is contrary to

all evidence, and yet it is true. It is true that I never wrote or published one of the atrocious papers which I am proved to have written; that I never wrote a line of the criminatory papers found in the secret receptacle of my desk; that I never went nearer than Buade Street to the post-office on the nights when I am represented to have posted letters in its chief passage; that I was not accosted in St. Ursule Street on the night of the 9th of last January by Benjamin Grady. But allow me to repeat my perfect confidence in Benjamin Grady's honesty. I know him to be an honest and worthy man. I am sure that he did not in his evidence utter a word that he did not feel to be precisely true. And I hope that this assurance may mitigate the pain which he will feel should he live to know that he injured me by erroneous statement. I am no less certain that Captain Darby and Mr. Clarkson are gentlemen of honour, who in their proceedings against me have been actuated by pure motives. Knowing all this, I am driven to the conclusion that the appearances of guilt which cover me are due to the

malignity of an enemy whom I incensed some months since by very blameworthy conduct, of which I was deeply ashamed as soon as I had been guilty of it. I do not mention that person's name; but he hears me when I say that I will try to bring myself to forgive him for all the sorrow that he has occasioned me and my dear brother.

"Sir Archibald, I have no right to remind you of what I once was in your estimation. I have no need to remind you that my father was your dear friend. But I venture to allude to our past friendship, in order that I may urge you to let no recollections of it cause you to deal leniently with me. In truth, sir, it is beyond your power to be merciful to me. No tenderness on your part can mitigate my doom. I have learnt that you are empowered to punish me with fine and imprisonment. It rests with you to decide whether I am fined a few or many pounds—whether *I* am to be imprisoned for a considerable term, or liberated almost immediately. What are fine and imprisonment to me—punished with loss of friends,

name, honour, and clothed with a garment of ignominy (far more repulsive than any convict's dress) which I may never lay aside? You can't restore to me one of my old friends, or any grain of the world's love and homage in which I was once so rich. You cannot lighten by so much as a grain the burden of shame which I must bear henceforth—bear till I lie down to rest in the grave, which, God be thanked! has quiet even for wretches like myself. A few more or less weeks of imprisonment, a few more or less hundreds of pounds of fine, will be no addition to or diminution of my punishment. Then, Sir Archibald, seeing that I am beyond your power through being in it, do not try to spare me, in compassion for your old friend's child. Fine me heavily; give me the fullest possible term of imprisonment. I am guilty in the world's opinion, and society would be outraged by any display on your part of leniency to me. Let it not be said by the poor people of Quebec, and the simple settlers in the backwoods, that Canada metes out justice sternly to vulgar culprits, and with delicate

forbearance to offenders of gentle birth. At least, let my miserable case have no evil consequences on the colony, which I love with all my heart, though I have been accused of traducing it. Sir Archibald Slingsby, add to all the many claims which you have on my gratitude by passing a severe sentence upon me."

Whilst the prisoner was delivering this speech she was vigilantly watched by her hearers, gentle and simple; and when she ceased, the owners of opera-glasses continued to observe her through their perspective barrels. That her words had produced an effect on the audience was evidenced by the hubbub and agitation which ensued on the cessation of the address. But there was no applause or sign that she had stirred the pity of the listeners. On the contrary, the murmurs of the assembly were expressive of disapprobation, and from one or two places of the crowded chamber there rose groans and hisses—demonstrations that were promptly checked by the official criers and ushers.

"The finest piece of acting I ever witnessed," Captain Darby observed in an under-tone to Admiral Mullenger, with sincere admiration of the woman, of whose guilt he had not a doubt. "Her appeal to the Chief Justice was exquisite for dramatic effect and knowledge of human nature. She has hit him; I know it by the way in which he blinks with his eyes, and tightens his lips over his teeth. He'll be tender to her. What man can be harsh on the beautiful woman who implores him to be harsh in that style?"

Sir Archibald Slingsby was hit, but he did his duty to the state.

"Prisoner at the bar," the Chief Justice said slowly, in a voice that was all the more expressive of mental perturbation because it was marked by no tremulousness or uncertainty, though it revealed the speaker's determination to discharge a painful office with ordinary composure, "I *will* be lenient to you in saying nothing that can aggravate your natural and sufficiently manifest sense of the ignominy of your position. With respect to the verdict, I must

declare that it has my cordial approbation. That it is the necessary consequence of the evidence, you very properly admit. I only wish that the evidence would permit me to doubt your guilt, which has been demonstrated by testimony so conclusive that any other verdict would have been an affair for regret. Thank heaven, there is no need for me to say a word to render you sensible of your degradation, and of the righteous abhorrence in which you are held by the community that once delighted to render homage to your misused talents and dangerous endowments. The sentence of the court is that you pay a fine of £3,000 in British money, and be imprisoned for twelve months."

The severe and heavy sentence was no sooner uttered by the judge than it was endorsed by public opinion with an outburst of applause that came from every part of the court. The men cheered, the ladies laid down their opera glasses and clapped their hands in a phrensy of enthusiastic satisfaction. In all the assembly

there was not a single gentlewoman to bestow a tear on her fallen sister.

But the prisoner's fate touched one of her own sex, who had the courage to brave social opinion, even in that scene of barbarous exultation.

"Darlint, my honey, my swate dear," exclaimed this generous creature, whose devotion to her friend was not less beautiful than its expression was ludicrous, "it's all the lies of divils broke loose from hell. Ye nivver did write the letthers. Me praast says that ye did, but all the praasts in Christendom may curse me for an anti-papist, heratical monster, ere ivver I'll belave a word of all the consperrators' sthlanderous fictions against you. Ochone, ochone, there's nivver a bit more justice to be had from lawyers in Canada than can be got from them in Ould Oireland."

Whereupon the clamorous dissentient proceeded to such extravagances in the way of yelling, screaming, and hysterical sobbing, that the police were compelled to seize her and drag her from the court.

"Dear Sir Archibald," the convict implored, "don't punish her. She is an honest, good old soul, an old fruit-woman, Norah Maccarthy, who can't even now forget that I have been kind to her."

Having uttered which entreaty, Felicia Avalon fell upon her knees, and hiding her face in her hands wept bitterly and silently, until the gaoler led her from the dock to a cell, from which she was in due course transferred to the Quebec Gaol.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IMPRISONMENT AND LIBERATION.

AND in the gaol of Quebec Felicia Avalon passed the next twelve months of her existence.

For an entire year she was withdrawn from her home, its comforts, its books and works of art, and was treated in every respect save one like the other female prisoners, undergoing penal discipline during the same period in the penitentiary of her native city. She wore the unsightly dress of a female convict, slept on the hard bed of a small cell, rose from her miserable couch and returned to it by sound of bell, performed the servile labour and ate the meagre fare of a woman enduring punishment for odious crimes. Her daily exercise in

the open air was taken in a yard together with the other female inmates of the bastile, some of whom had been 'proved guilty of disgusting offences, and bore in their repellent visages the evidence of incurable depravity. She was addressed by warders, and turnkeys, and superintendents, by the Number 125 which was painted on the door of her cell, was legible on the right sleeve of her prison dress of coarse serge, and written against her own dishonoured name in the records of the gaol. Her hair was cropped short on the first day of her term of penal incarceration, and once in every month of that period it was submitted again to the shears of a prison barber. If she had neglected to perform her allotted tasks of manual labour, she would have been rated and reported by an overseer, and deprived of some portion of the barely sufficient nutriment allotted to her by the magistrates of Quebec for her bodily sustenance. She was required to come and go hither and thither, to rise and sit at the order of female turnkeys, whose harsh voices were never more exasperatingly dictatorial than

when they taught Number 125, the lady convict, that she was no more to them than any other convict placed under their insolent government. Had she offered these feminine persecutors the means of proving her guilty of insubordination, she would have been liable, at the chief gaoler's discretion, to still more humiliating forms of personal restraint, and to the punishment of solitary confinement in the black-hole.

I have said that she slept on the hard bed of a small cell. But Felicia Avalon passed several weeks in prison ere familiarity with the indignities of her lot, and the gradual subsidence of her mental agitation, permitted her the relief of a few hours of unbroken slumber. Those who have known sharp griefs—the dread of ruin, the scalding humiliation of defeat, the sorrow of a parent mourning for the loss of an only child —do not need to be told how the solitude and darkness of wakeful nights can conquer fortitude and engender the despair that borders upon madness. They know how the hours of rest may become hours of terror and delirious un-

rest; how all that sleep can do for sensitive natures, writhing under a new calamity, is to deprive them of the inadequate consolations of reason, and put them at the mercy of phrenzied imagination.

During the first month of her imprisonment Felicia Avalon suffered far less by day than she endured at night, when weariness, without ever bestowing upon her unconsciousness for an hour at a time, often reduced her to a condition of moral imbecility unaccompanied with mental torpor. By day the circumstances of her life, though unspeakably repulsive and degrading, were endurable. Like the magnitude of the fine imposed upon her by the Chief-Justice, the insults of prison servants, the sordid services required of her, the vile garb, and the distasteful food assigned to her, were mere trivial indignities and annoyances in comparison with the shame of her undeserved punishment; and she contrived, without much difficulty, to accommodate her temper and spirits to the daily endurance of them. But it was otherwise in the recurring periods of loneliness and darkness.

The days had their stupefying sufferings—the nights their vivid terrors.

For a brief while her brother's daily visits to the gaol—where he purposed to persist in his official duties during her imprisonment—occasioned Fay Avalon's anguish considerable alleviation. Not that the chaplain made any improper use of his opportunities for affording consolation to his sister, or that his sister was ready to receive, even from him, kindness inconsistent with the obligations of his office. But it was something for the stricken woman to see her brother occasionally, passing to and fro in the assiduous discharge of his duties to her fellow-prisoners, to receive from him once in a dreary while a glance declaratory of fraternal sympathy and affection. It was more to her that she could, without any violation of the prison rules, get from him a few whispered words of encouragement in the course of every four and twenty hours, and that, when he entered her cell for a few minutes, even as he was accustomed to visit the cells of other convicts whose spiritual interests required brief periods of pri-

vate conference with their pastor, she could put her lips to his forehead and win from him the response of a fraternal kiss and fervent pressure of the hand.

But these daily interviews with her brother ceased after the first fortnight of her incarceration.

Felix Avalon's official position in the gaol was certainly incongruous, though not absolutely incompatible, with his fraternal relation to one of its female convicts. The magistrates felt that it would not tend to the edification of the prisoners that he should minister to their spiritual needs, whilst the women, whom he exhorted to penitence, could say that his sister was one of themselves. Moreover, though nothing had transpired at the trial to implicate him in his sister's criminal proceedings, the suspicions of his complicity in her guilt, which rendered him an object of general obloquy in Quebec society, had been whispered to the inmates of the gaol, to the serious diminution of his salutary influence over them. Hence it came about that it was formally debated, at a board of the visit-

ing justices, whether it was seemly that, under existing circumstances, the Reverend Felix Avalon should be allowed to remain in the post of Protestant Chaplain to the Penitentiary.

And in consequence of the discussion of this rather delicate question Sir Ronald Clavering, as chairman of the Quebec Bench, intimated to Felix Avalon, in a courteously-worded epistle, that the magistrates had determined to relinquish their connection with him, and elect another chaplain in his place. The magistrates had unanimously concurred in bearing testimony to the punctuality, judgment, and admirable zeal that had distinguished Mr. Avalon's discharge of the duties of his chaplaincy; and in accordance with their desire, Sir Ronald Clavering assured the Reverend Felix Avalon that they dismissed him with regret, and with sentiments of sympathy for his domestic trouble. To demonstrate that sympathy, and the respect which they continued to cherish for him, the magistrates had passed a resolution permitting him to visit his sister every Saturday afternoon during the term of her confinement,

and spend an hour with her in the privacy of her cell. Together with the letter of dismissal Sir Ronald Clavering sent Felix the amount of his salary then due, and the additional sum to which chaplains were entitled on being summarily dismissed from the service of the magistrates for other reasons than personal misconduct.

From the day on which he received that letter till the day of Felicia's liberation, Felix Avalon never entered the prison save on the afternoons when he was allowed by special privilege to spend an hour with her. Sir Ronald Clavering had hinted that the young clergyman would make these hebdomadal interviews spiritually profitable to his sister. But the suggestion was not acted upon. The brother and sister never consumed a moment of the precious hours in the consideration of religious topics—on which matters, by the way, Felix felt that his sister was as well qualified to teach him as he was to instruct her. Nor did either of them ever make any allusion to the trial which had plunged them in shame. Instinctively they

avoided every subject that was likely to bring to their thoughts any of the circumstances of the humiliating ordeal. They never gossiped about the doings of the city, or the sordid incidents of life within the walls of Felicia's prison. Of what, then, did they talk? Not of plans for the future, for they tacitly agreed to defer all consideration of the future until the doors of the gaol had opened to the captive.

Guided by his perfect sympathy with his sister's nature, Felix led her to recall the circumstances of their childhood—its pleasures, anxieties, triumphs; their father's gentleness, and the pains which he took to keep sadness outside their experience. The prisoner was lured to remember pleasant excursions on the St. Lawrence, journeys through wild regions of the backwoods, droll adventures in the nursery and playroom of the Fairmead, the ponies and domestic pets which had been their choicest possessions years since. More than a few times Felicia's eyes had brightened with tears of affectionate interest over her brother's reminiscences of the care which she had lavished upon

him when he was a puny child, and at later dates when he was a feeble, nervous, languid youth. As it has been remarked in an early page of this work, the sensitiveness of a man, acutely alive to his bodily deficiencies, disinclined Felix under ordinary circumstances to say aught that called attention to, or even implied a recognition of his lack of, masculine robustness. It was, therefore, a novel as well as keen delight to the captive to receive from his lips the proofs of his clear and romantic recollections of the services which she had rendered to him when he was imprisoned by disease. It was almost well to be where and what she was, to discover how he cherished the memories of what she had been. At other times—during the later months of her imprisonment, when she had acquired a mournful equanimity from almost incessant reflection on her misfortunes—he spent the weekly hour in repeating to her the plot of a new novel, or the arguments of a recently-published treatise, or the words of the last poem by Tennyson or Browning, which he had learnt by heart, so that he could impart them

without violating the rule which forbade visitors to give literature of any kind to prisoners with whom they were permitted to converse. His object was to sustain her spirits, to save her from the evils of perpetually brooding on her wrongs, and to provide her with the elements of hopefulness, if not to rouse hope itself in her breast. And so well did he succeed in his fraternal purpose that, ere the tenth month of her captivity had passed away, he had stirred her to more than one fit of laughter, that would have strangely scandalized the visiting magistrates had they heard it. Mirth and sorrow are closely allied. Perhaps some of my readers, chargeable with no heartless disposition to levity, have smiled at funerals, and for a few brief minutes surrendered themselves to riotous merriment in houses darkened by death.

It may appear strange to some of Felicia Avalon's acquaintances, but it is true that, before half her allotted imprisonment had passed away, she had so far accommodated herself to her ignominious position that she could interest herself in watching the details of the life of her

prison, which at first filled her with repugnance and loathing, and could derive amusement from studying the characters of her overseers and companions in captivity. Nor is it less true and remarkable that, instead of impressing her with a sense of their wearisome monotony and torturing slowness, the days of confinement appeared to pass with extraordinary quickness when habit had familiarized her with their monotony, and endurance had blunted the edge of grief. Five of every seven days were so exactly alike in their toils and duties and punctual recurrence of petty obligations, that they were distinguishable to the prisoner only by the appointed variations in the coarse dietary of the convicts. The week's calendar was marked by suet-puddings, pea-soup, broth thickened with oatmeal, and square blocks of hard mutton. The sixth day brought Felix to his sister's cell. The seventh was, perhaps, of all the days of each week, the most trying to Felicia Avalon. The early morning, the midday, and the evening services in the chapel of the gaol were endurable to her, though to the last of them she

writhed under the sermons which were preached at her, as well as all the other convicts, with a view to sending her forth into the world a reformed character. But the infliction of each Sunday, which occasioned her the sharpest discomfort, was the necessity imposed upon her of taking her place, like any big girl in a charity-school, thrice a day in the classes of adult female convicts, whom the matron of the prison, or one of the lady visitors, instructed and catechized in matters pertaining to religion. Of all the humiliations attending her penal treatment, there was none more cruelly trying to poor Fay than the obligation to reply meekly to the questions which Mrs. Chalkstone —lady-visitor in regular attendance, and chief gentlewoman of the evangelical clique of Quebec —used to put to her, Sunday after Sunday, on the elements of theology. It was no doubt very commendable in Mrs. Chalkstone to undertake the arduous task of converting No. 125, whom she had for years regarded with righteous indignation as a young person given over to worldliness. It certainly spoke much for the

zeal and self-confidence of Mrs. Chalkstone, whose natural powers were not superior to her very limited education, that she volunteered in the presence of her select circle of admirers to bring that miserable Miss Avalon into the true fold, by which she meant "the evangelical set" of which she was the patroness. And I doubt not that if the well-meaning busy-body had accomplished her design on Fay Avalon, she would have been her true friend in a most lugubrious fashion ever afterwards. But though Mrs. Chalkstone is to be credited with the best intentions, I may be permitted to question whether she took a graceful or altogether Christian course in worrying No. 125 with foolish questions and pompous admonitions. It was a rule of the prison that, on the dismissal of a Sunday Bible class of adult female convicts, each pupil should in turn approach the teacher, make her an obeisance, and say, "Thank you, madam, for your instructions, and may they be blessed to me!" After her liberation, Fay told her brother that she had for an hour or two thought seriously of proclaiming herself a Roman Catholic, so

that she might be exempted from attendance on the Protestant Bible classes, and thereby avoid the weekly annoyance of having to thank Mrs. Chalkstone for her exasperating ministrations.

The year of imprisonment followed in the track of years that had gone before. First, with slow, lagging steps; then with brisker paces; and, as it neared the end, with a rapidity marvellous to the captive, the time began, continued, and finished its course. The days seemed to gallop as the hour for the captive's liberation approached. The trial, which had consigned her to prison, and all the abominable scandals which had preceded it, seemed so very near, such events of "only the other week," that Felicia felt as though some deception were being practised upon her when she found herself under orders to quit the bastile, after twelve months of detention. It was scarcely credible that an entire year had passed in the gloomy, dismal, demoralizing place, that winter had given way to spring, that lake and forest and mountain had been steeped in the luxu-

rious light and heat of a Canadian summer, that autumn had clothed hill and valley with fires of crimson and gold, and that another winter, after covering the earth with snow, and the St. Lawrence with ice, and holding all nature in its grip, was about to yield to the gentler influences and no less mysterious forces of another spring,—since that hideous word "Guilty" had been heard in the Court House, to the delight of the hundreds of witnesses of her social ruin.

It was, however, the fact; and, strange to say, when the order of release came, Felicia Avalon was not eager to quit the gaol immediately she was free to do so. She might have left the prison directly after the breakfast-hour of the prisoners on the final day of her incarceration, and the usage of the penitentiary required her to depart within half an hour of the completion of that repast; but Felicia petitioned that she might remain in the abode of her captivity yet a few hours longer. Not that she had conceived an affection for the place; but liberation on the ordinary terms

involved exposure in the light of day to loiterers who assembled at the entrance of the prison, to greet with expressions of sympathy or reprobation the convicts set at freedom. It would require her to encounter curious, if not cruel eyes; and she shrank from the thought of driving by daylight, even in her closed carriage, through the streets of her native city, from the gaol to the Fairmead suburb. Neither she nor Felix had anticipated the apprehension of insult and acute sense of shame that the bare thought of passing through the portal of the gaol and returning to her home occasioned her. "Ask the magistrates," she implored of her brother, "to let me leave this hateful place in the darkness; and let night conceal me when I return to the home which I have disgraced."

So it was arranged, by the permission of the magistrates, that Fay Avalon should remain in her cell till nightfall, and return to her home under circumstances that promised to be least painful to her feelings.

Thus shrinking from the light of day, as though she were in truth the guilty creature

which the law had declared her to be, she went back to the old home in deeper wretchedness than she had endured since the earlier days of her punishment.

"Oh, brother, brother," the poor thing moaned, as the carriage turned into the Fairmead drive, "I have no right to come back to this place, on which I have brought a curse."

Felix had ordered that no servant should open the door to the returning mistress of the villa, or appear in the hall as she re-entered it. So the brother and sister found the vestibule and central apartment of their home silent and unoccupied; but when Felicia, obeying a slight impulse given to her by her brother's hand, entered the lighted library, she found there an old friend who had sent her many loving messages during her imprisonment.

Instead of throwing her arms round Felicia's neck, or giving her any other ordinary expression of feminine devotion, this old friend was kneeling on the floor, when Felicia almost stumbled over her; and ere Foxe Avalon's daughter could recover from the first shock of

her surprise and delight, this old friend had thrown her arms about the limbs of the dear mistress whose dark skirt she proceeded to kiss passionately.

"Martha, dear Martha," Fay Avalon implored, "don't do that—do rise—and kiss my lips."

"I must kneel, darling," the woman answered, turning her tear-covered face upwards, as she persisted in hugging Fay's knees. "I must kneel—to show you I am more your servant than ever. Oh, dear, dear mistress, let me be your servant till I die!"

"You shall be my servant, nursie, darling," Fay Avalon answered, as she stooped downwards, and broke the clasp of Martha's hands, "and my friend too—till death shall part us."

And having succeeded in raising her dear old nursie from the ground, Fay Avalon carried her to the sofa, where the two women sat together for the next hour, caressing and crying over each other.

At this present time Fay Avalon, who was never otherwise than habitually considerate and generous to her social inferiors, holds romantic

opinions respecting the delicacy of sentiment and nobleness of nature to be found amongst humble folk. Some few days since, to a friend who rallied her jocularly on her fanciful notions concerning the goodness of lowly people, she replied in my hearing, with a significance lost upon the person whom she addressed, "Some few years since, when I was in grievous trouble, the only women in the world who had faith in me and the courage to love me, were a simple servant and an untaught basket-woman who sold fruit in the streets of Quebec."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AVALONS DECIDE TO "GO HOME."

HAD it been in Felix Avalon's nature to place his own wishes before considerations for his sister's happiness, he would have determined to remain in Quebec, and live down the calumnies that had covered him with ignominy, instead of withdrawing from his native city and thereby admitting himself to have been utterly subdued by the arts of his adversary. Anyhow, he would have persisted in staying in the ancient capital of his colony so long as Major Tilbury continued to reside in it. To retire would afford the liveliest satisfaction to his victorious enemy; and the young clergyman had too much of the English soldier's pride and doggedness in his nature not to writhe un-

der the thought of taking a course that would be an acknowledgment of his defeat, and a cause of exultation to his sister's defamer.

But, ever ready to think for others rather than himself, and incapable of acting with the slightest selfishness in any matter affecting his sister's welfare, Felix had come to the conclusion, during the term of her imprisonment, that it would be best for them to quit the scene of their humiliation, and seek a home in some locality where their disgrace would be unknown. Other considerations, besides the mere shame of their misfortunes, compelled Felix to this conclusion. Miss Messurier's means of subsistence having been an annuity that ceased together with her life, no increase of fortune had accrued either to Felix or his sister by that lady's death; and whilst the departure of their aged relative had made them no richer, the heavy fine imposed on Felicia, the expensés of the trial that devolved upon her, and other consequences of Major Tilbury's villainy had greatly impoverished them. Felix had lost the emoluments of his chaplaincy, and on reflection had

arrived at the decision that he could not conscientiously persist in retaining his district church, under circumstances that forbade him to hope that he would speedily recover the confidence and affection of the persons residing in its vicinity. Moreover, the sudden secession of the wealthier members of his congregation, and the simultaneous falling off of the subscriptions by which his district school was supported, had brought upon him an urgent demand for the payment of a considerable debt, for whose liquidation he had indiscreetly made himself personally responsible to the builders of the school-house. In fact, without being plunged in pecuniary ruin, the brother and sister, whose means had never been quite adequate to the maintenance of their father's establishment, were reduced to circumstances that would compel them to sell the Fairmead, and retrench their expenditure in every direction. It was not to be hoped that, so long as Felix remained in Quebec, his profession would either yield him material profit, or afford him opportunities of usefulness. It was impossible that, whilst she

continued to reside in the city of her birth, Felicia would ever recover peace of mind.

Felix Avalon, therefore, had resolved on counselling Fay to leave Quebec, should she exhibit an inclination to stay in a place fraught with painful recollections, and prolific of odious vexations. But he was under no necessity to urge her to take a step which she was the first to propose.

"Let us leave this place," she said to Felix on the first day after liberation, using a tone of entreaty which indicated a fear that her brother might oppose her wish. "It is humiliating —*very* humiliating to be driven from one's native city by slander, and leave the enemy in triumphant possession of the social regard which we prized too highly, perhaps, when it was ours. But my pride has been so broken and ground down, Felix, that the ignominy of flight will occasion me scarcely one additional pang. After the horrible events of the last year and half, I could not endure life in this altered place. I could not enter the town, or show myself in a village within twenty miles

of Cape Diamond, without being pointed at as the vile writer, the defamer, the—the convict! I must fly from such unendurable injustice—such insupportable persecution. Of course, it would be more heroical in me to persist stubbornly in maintaining my ground, with the purpose of 'living down' the slanders, till society should discover its error, and repent of its cruelty. But I have not pride or strength enough left in me to play the part of a romantic heroine. I must fly; and—I am basely selfish—when I fly, you must be my companion, or I shall go down through long dull misery to death."

Whereupon Felix comforted his sister by assuring her that she had chosen, both for him and herself, the very course which he should have urged her to take, if she had not herself selected it. They would sell the Fairmead—it would not be difficult to find a purchaser for it; and when they had paid off their debts, they would steal away from Quebec, and find elsewhere happiness, less vivid, but not less pure and desirable, than the felicity which they had

known amongst those whose love of them had been converted into hatred and scorn.

"Yes, we must sell the old home," Fay assented, in a voice demonstrative of satisfaction with the prospect. "When it has passed into the possession of a happy family, I shall be able to remember it as it was in our brightest days; but if we retained it, I should never think of it without recalling the woe and anguish of this recent black time."

"And whither shall we go?" Felix asked. "Shall we settle in the backwoods?"

Fay shook her head. No; the backwoods were neither dark nor vast enough to hide such fugitives as they. In no spot of Canada where existence would be supportable to them, would they be secure from intrusion and exposure.

"You don't like the States—anyhow, not enough to wish to be a permanent settler in them?" Felix next inquired, simultaneously making a second suggestion, and replying to it in the negative.

The proposal of the United States as a land for her to adopt, accompanied though it was

by an acknowledgment of its unfitness, brought a disdainful curl to the lip of the Canadian lady, who had a Canadian aristocrat's contempt for the "big Republic." "No," she answered, with harshness and tartness that pained her hearer, "I won't follow all the other Canadian convicts to Yankee-land."

"Perhaps," Felix rejoined, making in his third suggestion the proposal which, he erroneously imagined, would be more acceptable to his sister than any other scheme, "we had better pass two or three years in continental travel. We shall be just rich enough to lead the life of economical tourists. Let us go to Paris, Berlin, Munich, Florence, Rome, Madrid. We will study art in the most famous art-galleries of Europe, divert our minds with the life of continental capitals, and ascertain whether the beauties of the Pyrenees and the Alps, the Black Forest, and Swiss lakes, are comparable with Canadian scenery."

"No," Fay answered with decisiveness which indicated healthy purpose and a return of her old moral vigour; "I don't wish to be an idler

—a useless unit in the number of aimless vagabonds and connoisseurs who herd together in the hotels of European capitals, and haunt the galleries of public museums."

"What, then, shall we do, Fay? Tell me your plan."

"Let us go straight home."

"Home!" Felix ejaculated with surprise, failing for the moment to catch his sister's meaning. "Why, we are at home, and have resolved to leave it."

"We will go to England," exclaimed Fay, who, notwithstanding her Canadian birth and Canadian patriotism, had always preserved in her loyal heart a true Englishwoman's love of the mother country. "After all—or rather, above all places dear to us in past times—England is our home. Let us go home."

"Not to Gloucestershire?" Felix inquired, with apprehension. "Surely you don't mean to Gloucestershire?"

"No, no, the Gloucestershire Avalons shall not be troubled by the Avalons of Canada, unless the time should come when the latter may

show themselves in their cousin's grand county-hall without a stain on their fame, or single cloud of suspicion resting over their honour. How could you imagine, Felix, that I thought of going to Gloucestershire?"

"I did not imagine it, Fay," Felix protested, hotly. "I felt that you could not wish to approach our English cousins whilst our story remains what it is."

"But let us go to England."

"By all means—if you wish to do so."

"This is no new thought with me, Felix. During the last few months I have often considered what course it would be best for us to take, on becoming free to do our own pleasure, within the limits of ordinary circumstances. And all my deliberations have brought me to the conclusion that we ought to go home—I mean to England. There we should live, not merely with English-speaking persons, but amongst our own people, as much as we have done here. You could readily procure professional employment—might buy a living in some pleasant southern county, and, until it fell

vacant, hold a curacy in London or a rural district."

"We could scarcely hope to find any corner of the old island, Fay, where our peculiar name and your books would not sooner or later lead to our identification as the Avalons who formerly dwelt at Quebec." Felix added apologetically, as he saw indications of the pain which the reminder occasioned his sister, "I should be wrong if I omitted to remind you of that risk."

"As for that danger," Fay responded quickly, "we might avoid it by changing our name. As Browns or Smiths, of whom there are many in the Clergy List, we should not attract the special attention that Avalon might draw upon us."

"No doubt," Felix answered deliberately, "we could change our name; but a clergyman could not safely have recourse to that rather common expedient, without informing his bishop of the matter, and otherwise publishing it to the world."

"Of course you would neglect none of the

requisite formalities. It is lawful for an English subject to assume any name he likes, without consulting the wishes of anybody, or asking leave of any public functionary. But you, I suppose, to guard against malicious representations, would apply for letters-patent, or whatever the licence may be called, authorizing you to change your name. Well, suppose you do so whilst you are the curate of a parish in the east of London, or in one of the great northern manufacturing towns. The fact would be registered somewhere or other, published in the *Gazette*, which scarcely any one reads, and republished in three or four other London papers. You would announce your change of name to the editor of 'The Clergy List,' and your bishop. But outside the obscure parish where you are assumed to be acting as a curate, not ten people would give a moment's thought to the affair, which even in the parish would be forgotten twelve months after your departure from it."

"The event would not make much stir or enduring impression," Felix assented.

"Having changed your name," Felicia Avalon

continued, "you could buy your living in another part of England, and in due course take possession of it, under your new name, which all your parishioners would assume to be your old one. Nothing can be simpler."

"Nothing," Felix admitted, laughing unaffectedly at the ease with which Fay, ever fertile of resources, sketched out a course of action for him. "What name shall we select—Stubbs, or Giles, or Jones?"

Fay was silent for a minute, and then she ejaculated bitterly, "Oh! that it should have come to this!—to need the disguise of a false name! Grief drove our father from the mother country to this colony, even as calamity of some kind yearly compels thousands of wretched people to fly from England for shelter and peace to one or other of her remote dependencies; and now we are driven by shame back to the old land to hide ourselves in its vast population. May our concealment be perfect!"

"We will do all that is honourable, or, rather, not dishonourable, to make it so."

"To make it so," Fay rejoined fiercely, "I

would do anything, right or wrong, that would secure me against discovery. I would surrender anything for the sake of security against detection—even my womanliness! For that end I would unsex myself if I could!"

"No, no, Fay," Felix expostulated mildly, "don't speak so—don't be so violent."

"I mean it," Fay continued, a wild and angry look taking possession of her handsome face. "Would that I could hide myself under your cloth!"

"Under my cloth?" Felix said, at a loss for the meaning of the wild words.

"Yes, under your cloth," Felicia answered, laughing a short, bitter, defiant laugh—such a laugh as her brother had never before heard come from her. "I am as clever and learned as you—not that I am very learned. I should make an excellent curate—I could read the offices far better than they are usually read; I could write sermons of unassailable orthodoxy, and preach them with dramatic effect, and with a voice capable of filling any church; I should delight in visiting the sick and comforting the

poor. You have often told me that I know as much as an ordinary graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, and could pass the examinations of any bishop who does not require his candidates for orders to have a smattering of Hebrew. I am taller than most men. Why should not I be your curate when you get a living in England?"

Poor Felix was so puzzled as well as hurt by Fay's wild talk, poured forth with strong signs of hysterical excitement, that in his embarrassment he fell back on his clerical dignity, and the authority of St. Paul's protest against prophesying women. In the voice which he used for exhortatory purposes in the school-room and the dwellings of the poor, he repeated the familiar prohibition, "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak."

Shocking her brother by her irreverence, and scaring him by her vehemence, Felicia answered, "Surely an order given by the apostle with respect to the untaught, undisciplined women of Corinth is not applicable to the educated,

refined, thoughtful women of the Anglo-Saxon race in the nineteenth century. The deliverer of the order never contemplated that, eighteen hundred years after its utterance, human creatures would be so superstitious and perverse as to use it as a muzzle for the mouths of such creatures as the gentlewomen of our own time. Moreover, the women whom St. Paul had under consideration were married women, with husbands capable of speaking for them, and teaching them in their own homes. I have no husband to instruct me."

"You have a brother, Fay," Felix interposed, in the hope of soothing the agitation which he rightly construed as an indication of the mischief which her recent sufferings had done his sister's temper and mental health; "would that he were better able to instruct you and comfort you!"

"Yes, yes, dear boy, I know all that; and you are dearer to me, and a far better teacher for me than my husband could be," Fay answered quickly. "I should take shame to myself for frightening and offending you as I have

now done, but I have not come out of prison so good and gentle a woman as I was before my suffering. The treatment which I have endured has roused a devilish spirit of insubordination in me, and it *does* irritate me to be told that women ought not to teach, but 'should learn in silence with all subjection,' because St. Paul said so of the kind of women he knew. The women, who cuckoo the words in total ignorance of the circumstances under which they were uttered, are less docile and obedient pupils in other matters to the teacher, who ordered his female disciples neither to braid their hair nor wear gold or pearls. It is strange, the inconsistency of the women who are rising in rebellion against their masculine tyrants, and demanding larger and higher spheres of labour. They will be doctors, though the doctor's calling abounds with difficulties which few women have the physical endowments to encounter successfully; and they overflow with indignation against the masculine selfishness and tyranny that exclude them from the medical arena. They teach men by books and works

of art; and their scorn is inexhaustible for the male pedants, who say that they cannot teach efficiently with pen and pencil. But when their masters say, 'Be silent in the churches, for you are disqualified by your sex for teaching men,' they submit like the slaves which they maintain that they are not."

"When you are calmer, Fay," Felix remarked gravely, and very tenderly, "you will think more reverentially of the authority of whom you are now speaking in a way that borders on flippancy, and, I must say, dear, something worse than flippancy. You will also see, without my poor help, that no good could come of liberating your sex from a restriction the wisdom and excellence of which the majority of educated women, as you observe, are not reluctant to perceive."

"No good come of it!" Fay retorted. "Why, the clerical vocation is the one of all others that we women are especially fitted for. As it is, we are the chief teachers of religion in every Protestant country. Women inculcate the precepts of religion in the minds of the young

children; women direct and control the spiritual life of well-ordered households; they impart the knowledge of the Christian mysteries to outcast infants and aged paupers. And if they were permitted to preach in the churches, their special powers—the charms that are theirs by right of their sex—would draw large congregations of masculine hearers, just as you men-preachers, by the wholesome exercise of your special powers, draw the multitudes of female learners."

How long Fay Avalon would have continued in this mad strain of reckless speech had not a look of alarm and repugnance in her brother's countenance suddenly arrested the flow of her wild mutinous eloquence, it is impossible to say; but fortunately alike for him and her, the man's look subdued without outraging the impetuous woman.

"Well, well," she observed after a pause, laughing lightly ere she fell into a fit of hysterical weeping, "it is clear that I am not to be your curate and to hide myself under the cloth. But, thank God, you will always be near to

me to take care of me! Be patient with me, Felix—do be patient with me! But be firm, too, Felix, for I want a master as well as a protector."

With which words the poor, vexed, baffled, broken woman fell into such violent agitation that Felix, who knew the limits of his ability to console his sister and minister to her diseased mind, was glad to call Martha to his aid, and after a few moments, leave the patient in her nurse's care.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FRIEND AND ENEMY.

HAVING decided on their future course, the brother and sister encountered no difficulty in making their arrangements for leaving Canada. Mr. Corbet was instructed to look out for a person wishing to become on fair terms the possessor of the Fairmead: and before summer had brought its terraces and shrubberies to the perfection of their beauty, Colonel Grandeville, a retired officer of an old Canadian family, agreed to take the villa, as it stood, together with its furniture and equipment, at the price set upon the property by the solicitor. So the old home was sold, and Mr. Corbet was repaid from the sale's proceeds the considerable sum due to him from his clients. Colonel

Grandeville, it was arranged, should take possession of the place, on the fifth of next August, the day on which Felix and Fay purposed to go on board "The Mary Queen," and begin their voyage to England.

To disconnect themselves as completely as possible from Canada, and so that they should preserve no relations with the colony which might lead to their discovery in the mother-country, the brother and sister transferred the residue of their diminished property from Canadian securities, paying over six per cent., to English consols, yielding half that interest. They paid every debt which they owed to the tradesmen of Quebec. They packed in four large cases such of their chattels as they wished to retain as memorials of their life in the colony, and prepared them for transmission, together with personal luggage, from the Fairmead to "The Mary Queen." And having satisfied all legal claims on their property, they gratified themselves by purchasing in the Quebec and Montreal Life Insurance Association an annuity that would preserve one of Fay Avalon's few

staunch friends from an old age of penury.

In obedience to womanly delicacy Norah Maccarthy had never approached the Fairmead since Fay's liberation from prison, though Martha had seen the affectionate creature almost daily prowling about in the vicinity of the residence during her patroness's captivity. Yet more, though the basket-woman yearned for a sight of the incomparable Miss Avalon, and pined for a word of news about her, she had refrained from accosting Felix, on the few occasions when business in the city had brought him across her path, lest by attracting his attention she should pain him. The motives of Norah's conduct were apparent to Felix, who, callous to the indignity of being avoided or directly "cut" by his social equals, was acutely affected by the sympathy of the one old acquaintance who avoided him out of tenderness and respect for his sorrow.

Great, therefore, was Norah's excitement when, one bright day in June, she saw Miss Avalon's maid cross over the open space before the front of the Old Château to the spot where

she was sitting on the pavement between her baskets. It was obvious that Mistress Martha —as Norah was wont to designate Fay's servant—wished to speak with her; and as Norah scrambled to her feet to receive Mistress Martha with due respect, she almost upset her baskets in her agitation.

"A fine day to you, Misthress Martha, and my obeisance to you!" said Norah, who, though she had in old times never hesitated to call Fay "her darlint" and "her honey," was wondrously respectful, if not servile, to Fay's body-servant.

"You haven't been up our way lately, Norah," Martha remarked, with reassuring affability. "I hope you have not grown to disdain us, like the rest of the world."

"Och! Misthress Martha, don't be saying that. I have kept away from the Fairmead these last few weeks just because I haven't had the heart to go nigh it, for fear of meeting my lady."

"But you used to come about the place often enough months since."

"Ah! and that was just because I had not

then the heart to keep away from it," Norah replied, beginning to whimper.

"There, there, cheer up, old woman. I have sought you out to tell you the news. We are going to leave Canada."

"And gow back to the ould country, madam?"

"Ay, like enough, or Ireland, or Scotland—who knows? Anyhow, over the big pond."

"When?"

"Some six weeks or two months hence. And before master and mistress and I go on board 'The Mary Queen'——"

"Ay, 'The Mary Queen,'" ejaculated Norah, as she mentally resolved that nothing but death should prevent her from seeing the last of Miss Avalon in Canada.

"We are going to take a trip to the lakes, and the falls, and other places, just to say good-bye to them for ever."

"When do ye gow off for the lakes, madam?"

"The day after to-morrow. And the fancy has taken Miss Avalon that she'd like to see you to-morrow, and give you a few parting

words, and a bit of a present she has for you."

Whereupon Norah began such a howl of delight as would have brought a crowd about her and Mistress Martha, had it not been abruptly cut short by Martha saying, "There, Norah, none of that—don't Ojibbeway in that fashion, but behave like a Christian, You'll bring the mob upon us."

"I'll behave myself, Misthress Martha; but to be tould I may shee and shpeak to her again is meat, whasky, fruit, flowers, 'bacca, and sunshine all in one."

"You mayn't raise your hopes about the present," observed Martha, who, though she had a kindliness for her mistress's ungainly *protégée*, did not rate Norah at her full value. "It will only be a trifle."

"Och! Misthress Martha," Norah returned, in her stateliest fashion, "if the Lord had made you Oirish insted o' Saxon, you wouldn't have spoken that word."

"There, old woman, I did not mean to hurt you," Martha responded, rather ashamed of herself, and, under the sense of shame, softening

to her companion. "Anyhow, you've taught me to know an old Irish body can have a right good heart, and I say, bless you, Norah, for the lesson!"

Whereupon Martha, fearful of condescending too far to her social inferior in a public place, moved off hastily, saying, "Come in the afternoon at three o'clock."

The present which Fay Avalon made to the astonished Norah Maccarthy on the afternoon of the following day, proved that either Martha was ignorant of its value, or that she wished to enhance the recipient's surprise at its munificence, when she told Norah not to entertain unreasonable hopes about its worth. The gift was a paper which bound the directors of the Montreal and Quebec Life Insurance Association to pay the sum of a hundred dollars to Norah Maccarthy on the first day of every January and the first day of every July, during the life of the said Norah, who was so perplexed and astounded by the superb donation, that Felix and Fay had some difficulty in making her comprehend the significance and powers of

the mysterious document which they put into her hands. And when Norah had been made to realize her position, as the possessor of an annual income that exceeded what she had ever derived in a single year from her trade, the magnitude of her good fortune deprived her for several minutes of that gorgeously metaphorical diction which she was wont to employ in her conferences with "the quality" of Quebec. "Darlint," the grotesque old body assured Fay, when she had recovered from the first shock of amazement, and regained a little of her oratorical efficiency, "it ain't the gould that will gladden me ould days, but the light o' love that will make every piece o' the sacred gould glisten like a kine fresh minted in the land o' the fairies and janii,"—an assurance that brought a smile to the face of her benefactress, who knew better than Norah that the half-yearly payments would not be made in the precious metal present to the basket-woman's imagination, but in clumsy dollars of silver, or notes of the Canadian paper currency.

"And, oh! dear lady," Norah petitioned, as

she prepared to take her leave of the mistress of the Fairmead, "there's summat ye must yet do to the ould body ye have made a millionaire and a Craysus. Give me your hand, darlint, and let an ould woman of the streets press it to her lips, and pray a bit prayer on it."

Whereupon Fay Avalon extended her white right hand to the petitioner, and, when it had been duly saluted and mumbled over, returned the attention by stooping down and putting her warm, tender lips on the hard, brown skin of Norah's forehead.

As Norah was hobbling away from the Fairmead, with tears in her eyes, and a burning heart in her throat, Martha encountered her in the avenue, and put in her hand a bran new "bacca-box." "It will help to keep an old friend in your mind, Norah," Martha said, as she presented the keep-sake.

"Och! Mistress Martha," sobbed the recipient of this supplemental token of the regard in which she was held at the Fairmead, "ye are over kind; ye are over good—as everybody ought to be that touches a hem of my lady's

robe. But let me go, madam, or I'll scream outright, and you shall be scoulding me for being a haythen an' a 'jibbeway."

The weeks that elapsed between the date of these occurrences and the opening of August, Felix and Fay, attended by their female servant, spent in making visits to some of the choicest scenes of Canada, dear to them for sacred memories of their happy childhood and youth.

On the first day of August, 1862, they returned to the Fairmead, and, ere it passed into the hands of its purchaser, spent a few last nights beneath its roof.

On the final evening of her occupancy of the old home, Fay Avalon was walking in the most secluded part of its garden, and in the shade of quiet trees and deepening twilight, when a stirring in the shrubs behind her caused her to turn quickly round, and face a visitor who had intruded on her privacy.

Had the waning light been insufficient to render the features of her disturber visible, the horror that gripped her heart, and stayed the

currents of her blood, even before she looked at him, would have informed her that the trespasser was Joseph Tilbury.

"Major Tilbury," observed Felicia Avalon, who was the first to speak, "even you should have lacked the hardihood and cruelty to come here to trouble me."

"You and your brother and your servant leave Canada to-morrow."

"We do."

"You have taken berths in 'The Mary Queen' for the voyage to Liverpool."

"You have informed yourself correctly of our plans."

"I have; and, madam, you may rely upon it that I shall continue to inform myself correctly about them."

"You are at liberty to do so, sir. I am well aware that the labours of a spy are congenial to you."

"Say also, Miss Avalon, the labours of an informer. I have spied upon you and informed against you to some purpose," responded the

officer of Artillery, with imperturbable effrontery and cruel mockery.

"It is not in my power to contradict you," returned Fay, who would have hastened to the house, had not her persecutor selected his ground so as to render it impossible for her to get nearer to the villa without making a personal assault on him.

"I have covered you with shame—far worse shame than the disgrace you designed for me," continued Joseph Tilbury, speaking in a low but clear voice.

"No, Major Tilbury, not worse," Fay answered, "for the obloquy and humiliation you have brought on me are undeserved. It is a comfort to me to know that,—a consolation which you will not have when your time of punishment arrives."

"It will never arrive."

"Perhaps not in this world."

"I am speaking only of this world, Miss Avalon. A very agreeable world to most of us, though gaol-birds and convicts may take a different view of its merits, and prudently fix

their hopes on a future existence, about which they know nothing."

To which brutal and impious speech Fay made no reply.

"Anyhow you have sold your old home, and are about to fly from Canada without bidding farewell to those who were once your friends, or even leaving cards upon them."

"We are about to leave Canada. I have told you so."

"And it is I—the man whom you spurned, taunted for being a bastard, meant to crush—who have crushed you, put the convict's brand on your fame, and now drive you from your native city, from which you designed to expel me."

"Yes, Major Tilbury," Fay assented in a voice, hoarse with rage and fear of her cowardly torturer, "you have had your revenge."

"Pardon me, Miss Avalon," the Major rejoined, raising his voice as he adopted a tone of burlesque politeness, "on every other point touched upon in our conversation we have agreed; but you must permit me to correct you now. Instead of having had my revenge, I

have only begun to have it. Do not, my dear madam, conceive that you have arrived at the end of your punishment, or reached the lowest bottom of your degradation. You may try to hide yourself in Europe, but you shall not escape me. The very stones of any English city or village in which you seek concealment of your ignominy shall, at my bidding, proclaim your story. You may settle in a Continental city, and make friends amongst its English colonists and native inhabitants, but just when you imagine that you have achieved your purpose to draw new associates and admirers about you, you shall learn your mistake from the sudden coldness of your new acquaintances, the insolence of hotel servants, the scorn of loiterers in public ways. You may bury yourself in a German town or an Italian village, but I will discover, unearth, and denounce you!"

In the terror, which robbed her utterly of all fortitude and womanly pride, as the hissing voice of her Satanic persecutor declared that all her attempts to escape from her ignominy should be futile, Fay implored, "If you have

any particle of human compassion left in your heart, have mercy on me! You have crushed me, darkened my brother's life, driven me out on the wide, unkind world! Let this be the end of your revenge. Spare me!"

"Have mercy on you!—spare you!" laughed Major Tilbury, with coarse mockery. "Why, madam, you forget yourself and me too. I am the destroyer of Millicent Lacroix—I am Colonel Congreve." He lowered his tone as he added, after a pause, the last words of his series of brutal menaces, "So long as there is life in my body, and warmth in yours, I will be your relentless, implacable, insatiable persecutor. Hide yourself where you will, disguise yourself as you like, I will make your existence in this world a worse hell than ever fanaticism imagined! You may unsex yourself, and disguise yourself in man's clothing, but I will hunt you out, strip you of your disguise, and proclaim you to be the woman who was once a convict in the gaol of Quebec."

Each word of this speech cut its way into Fay Avalon's heart and brain. The agony which

this last threat occasioned her was attended with transient giddiness and blindness; and when her sight and mental clearness had returned to her, she found herself alone in the garden. For awhile her enemy had left her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOUND FOR LIVERPOOL.

THOUGH 'The Mary Queen' was regarded by the Canadians with affection as one of the first steamboats to ply regularly between Quebec and Liverpool, she had long been a by-word for slowness and awkwardness with the navigators of the St. Lawrence. A square tub, with huge paddle-boxes protruding from her sides, she was a model of what a steamboat ought not to be, and would have been discarded years since by her owners, for failing to respond to the requirements of the age, had not the conservative spirit of the colonists persisted in encouraging her to repeat her tardy passages to and fro over the Atlantic. A quick passage with 'The Mary Queen' was

five or six days longer than the slow journeys of the magnificent screw steamers with which she had the hardihood to compete. But the sluggish craft had her recommendations—in low fares, comfortable though confined cabins, and an old, white-bearded, weather-beaten captain (John Deighton), who had the good word of every living man aud woman who had crossed the Atlantic under his care. Moreover, 'The Mary Queen' enjoyed a high reputation for safety and good fortune. Not only could she make the boast of the great Cunard Company of never having lost a passenger or a letter, but Captain Deighton was justified in averring that ever since her maiden trip from the Mersey to the St. Lawrence, she had never encountered mishap of any kind, though, as Heaven and her captain knew right well, she had encountered many a wild storm, and coasted along Newfoundland in the densest of the sea-fogs for which the waters off that island are famous. Superb vessels had foundered mysteriously in the vast ocean, or been wrecked on the reefs off the two Miquelons, or entered the St. Law-

rence so battered and knocked about by wind and water as to be scarcely recognizable; whilst 'The Mary Queen' had been making her voyages without a single mischance.

Several considerations combined to make Felix and Fay Avalon select 'The Mary Queen' for their voyage to England, in preference to every one of the faster and more commodious vessels by which they might have traversed the Atlantic. That Colonel Avalon had made four agreeable passages in the aged craft was enough to dispose his son and daughter to regard her with favour. Captain Deighton was personally known to Felix and Fay as a generous and chivalric sailor, who would not fail to shield them from impertinence and annoyance, should any of their fellow-passengers venture to molest them with questions respecting their shameful troubles. But the fact which, more than any other, determined them to take berths in the tardy craft, was that she had completely fallen out of fashion with Canadians of the superior classes, who, whilst condescending to applaud her as an interesting curiosity, would

have ridiculed the proposal that they should make a voyage in her. On the larger and more sumptuous vessels, Fay and her brother would be likely to encounter old acquaintances amongst their fellow-passengers. On board 'The Mary Queen' it was probable that, with the exception of the captain, there would not be a person justified in addressing them on the score of previous acquaintance.

On August 5th, 1862, when 'The Mary Queen' moved away from her wharf, the Avalons and Martha discerned, amongst the crowd of such loiterers and cadgers as are invariably to be found hanging about a quay, not a few persons who had come to the water's side to bid farewell to departing friends, and two or three individuals who had descended from the Upper Town to see the last of Foxe Avalon's representatives. Sitting on huge blocks of quarried stone was visible Norah Maccarthy, weeping bountifully, and making rapid advances to a fit of clamorous grief. Mr. Corbet, crediting himself with considerable moral courage and chivalry in respect of his conduct, had

come to the quay to shake hands with his profitable clients, whose departure from the colony was regarded by the quality of Quebec as an affair for congratulation. Conspicuous, also, amongst the loungers on the quay was Major Tilbury, who smoked a cigar, whilst, leaning on Dandy Trevor's arm, he eyed with malicious satisfaction the signs of misery in the countenances of his victims.

So long as the steamer, aided in her progress by the strong currents of the St. Lawrence, was visible to spectators on Canadian soil, Felicia Avalon was at the same time agreeably roused and tranquillized by the passage. She experienced no disposition towards violent grief, as the shining roofs of Quebec and the glittering sides of Cape Diamond slowly disappeared from her range of vision. On the contrary, as she saw the ramparts of her native city fade away, she felt the relief and gratitude of a traveller on emerging from a dark and perilous wilderness. It was pleasant to sit on deck in the balmy breeze and luxurious sun, watching the picturesque scenery on either side

of the steamer—the islands clothed with vegetation, and bright with villages and homesteads; the ranges of distant mountains, whose blue tops were scarcely distinguishable from the blue heaven that kissed them; the sweeping outlines of primæval forests, already giving faint promises of their fast-approaching autumnal glories; the coves, in which white towns nestled under beetling hills; the rivers, that, coming from regions undisturbed by human industry, tumbled their eddying waters into the tides of the St. Lawrence. It was agreeable to the flying outcast to draw from the beauties on which she feasted her eyes an assurance that nature would bestow happiness as well as affluence on the colonists of Canada —happiness compared with which the misery of one luckless woman was too insignificant to deserve a moment's consideration.

Moreover, it was a considerable satisfaction to Fay to find her fellow-voyagers, without exception, a civil and kindly set of people, who, instead of shunning her, though they were probably aware of her story, came out of their

way to offer her courtesies. Sixteen of the cabin passengers were homely, prosperous men —farmers or stockbrokers, most of them—on their way to England to revisit the scenes of their childhood. Five of them were husbands, and had their wives with them—women with honest faces and genial smiles, who spoke an English highly spiced with American phrases and intonations. There were four sets of children on board, pertaining to four of these rustic ladies. Felix was the only Church of England clergyman on board; but "the cloth" was further represented by two Baptist ministers, with whom Felix soon put himself on friendly terms. The steerage-passengers were no more than four in number; consequently, 'The Mary Queen' was not heavily laden with passengers, but she made up for the smallness of her human cargo by the largeness of her freight of goods consigned to her by Quebec traders. In all, the passengers numbered forty-four—just enough, together with the crew, as a Montreal spirit-merchant remarked, with grim jocoseness, to fill the two big boats without crowding, if

'The Mary Queen' should run upon a reef off Newfoundland.

Further acquaintance with Captain Deighton increased Fay's liking for him. Very unlike the new school of captains of the mercantile marine, who are sometimes barely distinguishable from men who do their business in London counting-houses, John Deighton was a stout, broad-shouldered creature, very like a bull-dog in his square nose, large mouth, and dropping jowls; closely resembling a sandy Tom cat in his broad, freckly forehead and sleepy eyes; and yet displaying an abundance of joviality and energy in his bluff visage, whose florid complexion contrasted strongly with its setting of white whiskers and beard. Familiar with the circumstances that made the Avalons his passengers, the cheery captain of 'The Mary Queen' overflowed with politeness to Fay, with whom he chatted in the loud, shouting voice not unusual with mariners who are required frequently to out-roar the rattling winds.

But when Fay Avalon had made acquaintance with her fellow-passengers, and tasted

something of the monotony of a voyager's experiences, her cheerfulness was exchanged for depression, which deepened into profound sadness as 'The Mary Queen' churned onwards towards the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It was a calm, clear evening, light as day, though the mellowing tints of the firmament indicated the approach of night, as she stood with her brother listening to the chaffering and yarn-spinning of a knot of seamen and lads who lounged against bulwarks, or sat on a huge coil of cordage near the door of the engine-room.

On the one side of their course lay grim, inhospitable Anticosti, with its cruel, murderous reefs running out treacherously from the destructive island; far away in the other direction were visible the cliffs and precipitous hills that border the coast between Cape Rosier and Cape Gaspé.

"We are clear of you once again," said one of the sailors, pointing towards Anticosti with his pipe, just taken from his mouth, as he uttered a churlish farewell to the long island.

"You haven't caught us this time. May you spare all poor seamen and their craft till I set eyes on you again!"

"Ay," joined in Ned Jones, seaman, some fifty years of age, but much older in appearance, "she is a thieving, murderous slip of Cain's own soil. If she could speak, she could tell tales that would curdle the blood of men, and kill women outright with fear."

"You know that right well," responded the first speaker, Tom Sumner, encouraging his shipmate to tell, for the benefit of the lads and land-listeners, a tragical and ghastly tale which Ned Jones had told again and again to the strong and not altogether disagreeable excitement of rude seamen.

"Many's the good ship that cursed slip o' land," replied Ned Jones, adopting the deep, hoarse, guttural voice in which he was wont to deliver the story which had created for him an enviable social position amongst men of his calling, "has sucked into her maw and devoured. She breaks up huge ships as a giant might crumble biscuits; and when she has

smashed them to splinters, she kills the seamen that swim or float, poor lads, to her cursed rocks. Och, she does worse. Sometimes she changes them to cannibals, and howls with glee to see Christian sailors eat one another. I tell ye, she is the maker of cannibals !"

The deep, hoarse voice became louder and more terrifying as it made this concluding asseveration, and the speaker raised his huge brown fist, and shook it in impotent menace at the execrable land.

"Ay, ay," Tom Sumner assented; and the other seamen and ship's boys repeated Tom's expression of assent, so that there was a chorus of ay-ays.

"'Tis thirty-three years since," Ned Jones resumed, after a pause, "when I—a lad then, and working with a crew of Magdalen Island fishermen—landed nigh the Fox Cove, and came upon a boat which had belonged to the 'Granicus.' A timber-brig, the 'Granicus,' left Quebec November 15, 1828, for Ireland, and was wrecked on the east point of that dreary, long slip of land, good for nought but stations

for lighthouses, to warn ships to hold aloof from her rocks, and for food stations, to save from starvation, or worse, poor shipwrecked mariners, who had better make towards the open deep for death, than pull towards Anticosti for safety. The only people who live on the island are they that look after the lights on the lighthouses, and supply the food-stations with victuals. Those stations are few and far apart, and the boards that show wrecked mariners the way to them are none too many. Sailors may swim to the island, and climb the cliffs, and then have to walk forty miles with guess-work guidance ere they come to the first provision-post. On entering it, starved, clammed, dead-beat, they may find it deserted, and nothing to comfort them but, 'Twelve leagues west to Provision-Post,' cut on a board. They must push on again, or lie down to die, or cast lots, and—by the Lord I am not lying to you!"

"Ay, ay, speak the truth; you do it," ejaculated Tom Sumner, who controlled the applause of Ned's auditors, who sat open-mouthed whilst the narrator delivered his story, and enjoying

the horrors of the narrative as much as ever costermonger enjoyed a melodrama at the Surrey Theatre.

"The 'Granicus' was wrecked and smashed up to splinters, but her crew were saved—for what? I'll show you. The crew put off in the boat from the wrecked ship, they reached land, they came to the provision-post near the Fox Cove, after twelve miles of walking. But Godin, a one-eyed, barbarous, limping, lying thief—the man stationed at the post—had deserted his station, and left it without provisions. Nine months later I and my mates from Magdalen Island discovered how the men of the 'Granicus' had fared. We explored the provision-post, in which they had found nothing but cooking-utensils. What they cooked they brought with them. We found the rooms of the station fitted like a butcher's store; from their beams hung the remains of human carcases. Of eight men, two women, and three children we found the remains. There were the ashes of a dead fire, and over them a pot containing meat. On the boards of the house there was a diary which the cannibals had kept.

And I—I myself—found a parcel of watches, rings, and forty-eight sovereigns, with a note, signed by B. Harrington, the last survivor of the shipwrecked crew, ordering that the finder should send the valuables to Mary Harrington, Barrack Street, Cove of Cork. Poor monster! Though he had eaten of all his mates, he could still love his wife. No, he had not fed on all his mates, for in the forest behind the cove we came upon the skeletons of two of them, who preferred to escape to the woods, and wander through them till they died of hunger rather than——"

Ned Jones had come within a few words of the end of his story, but ere he could complete the last sentence of it he was silenced abruptly —not by the approbation of his auditors, but by a shrill, sharp, prolonged cry of anguish from Fay Avalon, who had been so fascinated by the ghastly recital that she could not withdraw herself from the group of auditors until its hideous and disgusting details had deprived her of the power to control her emotion.

Hastily putting his arms round his sister's

form, Felix lifted rather than led her to the cabin.

"I tried to withdraw you from them at the beginning of the story. I knew you could not endure it," Felix observed, in justification of himself, when he had pacified her agitation.

"You did, dear," Fay answered, "but I could not obey you. The man's voice, manner, look, made me unable to move. All the facts of the story were familiar to me. Every Canadian woman knows the fate of the 'Granicus' and her crew. But I never felt all its horrors before."

And whilst Fay was recovering from her hysterical excitement, Ned Jones—more humbled than elated by the lady's involuntary testimony to the power of his story—muttered to Tom Sumner, "It's no tale for a gentlewoman to hear. You should have told me that the lady was behind me, and within hearing."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOG ON A ROCK-BOUND COAST.

THE shock given to her nerves by Ned Jones's reminiscences did not increase Felicia Avalon's power to contend with the deepening gloom of her mind. Her spirits, raised by the excitements of the earlier part of the passage down the St. Lawrence, had fallen as they neared the entrance to the gulf, and ere she heard the sailor's account of the hideous fate of the crew of the "Granicus," she had sunk to a condition of melancholy that was distressingly visible in her sternly-set features.

After recovering the appearance of composure, she bade Felix good night, and retired with her maid to the little closet opening into the ladies' saloon, in which she and Martha had their nar-

row berths. The night she spent in restlessness, and when morning came she was weary and very mournful. She was, however, able to conceal her distress from all her fellow-passengers in the chief cabin, with the exception of Felix and Martha, and shortly after breakfast she was well enough to go on deck, and sit in the sun on a chair, which she occupied the greater part of the day. Another miserable night ensued, and on the following morning she resumed her seat on the deck, to witness one of those strangely beautiful atmospheric scenes which mariners, accustomed to the marvels of the gulf of St. Lawrence, and the waters south and south-west of Newfoundland, regard with indifference.

Raising her eyes from the pages of a number of the *Edinburgh Review*, after spending an hour in a strenuous but scarcely successful attempt to lose sight of her own woes in the vivid descriptions of an unusually powerful article, she was surprised to see a silvery, smoke-like mist creeping over the surface of the merry sea towards the steamer, and rising upwards to the

blue heavens, whose blueness became momentarily more faint. The quickness with which the white vapour came up from the south-west seemed to impart speed to 'The Mary Queen,' who appeared to be accountable for the rapid diminution of the clear area that lay between her prow and the hazy distance. The next feature of the changing scene that attracted Fay's attention, was the appearance of curling lines of cloud, which came in sinuous eddies out of the dimly-luminous whiteness, wreathing into and gliding over one another in their advancing and ascending course. Soon the sun was obscured—not darkened or grossly veiled, but gradually weakened—by the careering waves of vapour that stole away the colour and glory of the central orb, whilst giving distinctness to its circumference. The transformations became quicker and more amazing. The filmy circlets of gossamer cloud were exchanged for huge masses of vapour that reflected the solar rays with vivid and strongly contrasted hues, curiously and startlingly different from the tints of common rain-clouds. The hues were of red,

blue, black; and as they momentarily passed from shade to shade, and from colour to colour, whilst the atmosphere was being more largely surcharged with moisture, the sun changed its sickly tint of pale, whitened yellow, for a fierce glowing crimson, and seemed to contract from the size of a prodigious bomb to the magnitude of a cricket-ball. Then the lights were all put out, and 'The Mary Queen' went churning onwards in sunless, starless, dismal darkness, whilst the vapour descended on her decks in fine, thin, searching rain, that penetrated the clothing and sent icy coldness to the marrow of the landsmen who, like Fay Avalon, had beheld the successive transmutations of the heavens and the sea with wonder, and delight, and apprehension.

"Ah, here you are; I have found you at last—a difficult business in this sea-fog," a voice observed, as a hand was laid on Fay's shoulder.

But though the words were uttered within six inches of her ear, they seemed to Fay to come from a long distance; and though they were spoken by Felix, the atmosphere so

changed the characteristics of his voice that Felicia for a few moments imagined herself to be addressed by a stranger.

Rising hastily, in response to the touch on her shoulder rather than the words, Fay Avalon asked, "Who is that?"

"Felix," was the answer; "don't you know me? Can't you see me?"

"Yes." Now that she had grown accustomed to the darkness, Fay could discern her brother's features.

"What has happened?" she inquired.

"We are caught in a sea-fog," Felix explained. "The wind changed during the night to the quarter from which it drives the fog-banks northwards. Captain Deighton has never known the fog so far north as this before:—but we are in it now; there's no doubt about that."

"It is very cold," Fay responded, whilst her teeth began to chatter, and her limbs shivered.

"Come down into the cabin," Felix urged. "Make haste, or you will be wet to the skin before you are under cover."

"I'll come."

But to carry her purpose into execution was no easy task. For a sudden squall was buffeting 'The Mary Queen,' and the sea was so disturbed that the lady without "sea-legs" found it difficult to walk on the deck of the rolling vessel.

With her brother's assistance, however, Fay contrived to stagger to within a few feet of the cabin ladder, when, just as they caught hold of the bulwark, on one side the lower deck, to save themselves from being thrown down by a sudden lurch of the boat, they heard Captain Deighton and his mate exchange the following words:—

"It will be sharp work," said the mate.

"Ay, and ticklish too. The fog is on us four-and-twenty hours sooner than I reckoned. Have out the fog-horns and lanterns: look after the men: I'll go to Hornsby."

They heard no more; but the tone of the Captain and his first officer revealed to the Avalons that the seamen did not like the aspect of affairs.

At the same moment, a sudden clattering was heard on the decks, above the noise of the roaring wind and angry waves and groaning engines, and the rain came down in torrents.

The first-class passengers had already assembled in the saloon-cabin, in which the steward and his assistants were lighting lamps as though it were night.

"The day has closed in smartly, and just a little too soon," observed a Toronto store-keeper to the steward.

"Yes," was the answer, "and the sun won't rise yet awhile. We must get clear of Newfoundland before you'll care to sit about and smoke on deck again."

The next hour was spent dismally. The voyagers had not accommodated themselves to the gloomy circumstances; and men, women, and children were sitting or lying on the fixed couches of the saloon in discontent and dejection. Some of the male passengers were seized with sea-sickness, and uttered those alternatively plaintive and irritable cries for the steward which sufferers from the malady of the

sea are wont to deliver, to the injury and exasperation of fellow-passengers about to fall ill. Three of the children were screaming with alarm, whilst there came to the saloon from the ladies' cabin sounds which informed Felicia that, if she turned sick, she would not be without sisters in that affliction.

Affairs were thus cheerless in the saloon, when Captain Deighton influenced them for the better by showing himself to the occupants of the cabin, assuring them that all went well on deck, and encouraging them to make themselves as jolly as possible under unpropitious circumstances. The ladies should wear their warmest clothing without delay. The men should bestir themselves to make amusement for the ladies. There were abundant means of diversion,—in cards, chess, drafts, and the library (consisting of some forty dog-eared novels) with which the saloon was provided. The Captain would come in from time to time to say how the world went overhead; but he must be mostly on deck, keeping a sharp look-out, a rather difficult feat in such a fog.

Thus put on their metal by Captain Deighton, and assured by the same practical adviser that it was their duty to "cheer up," those of the men, who were not succumbing to sea-sickness, ordered stiff tumblers of toddy from the steward, and made up "fours" for rubbers or separated into "twos" for drafts and chess. On visiting the saloon for a second time, after an hour's absence, Captain Deighton found two rubbers going on, and all the not prostrate passengers occupied with amusement of some sort, a change of which the Captain expressed his approbation by shouting jovially, "Ah, this is something like." On approaching the end of the cabin-table, where Felix and Fay were playing besique—a game popular in Canada years before it became fashionable in London and Paris, the considerate Captain lowered his voice to a confidential tone, as he remarked, "I am afraid, Miss Avalon, the fog wont be in a hurry to clear off, and that you will find it cruelly cold. Put on your warmest clothing. If you can contrive to wear one of your brother's long, clerical coats, you'll find it comfortable under your fur mantle."

"A good thought, Captain Deighton," Fay answered, heartily pleased to find that, instead of deepening her melancholy, the fog and rain had roused her from enervating sadness, "I'll take your advice as soon as I have won this game.—And the game is won!" she exclaimed, as she killed her brother's ten of trumps with an ace, and laid down double besique. "You've brought me good luck, Captain Deighton."

"I should be sorry to bring you ill-luck," replied the Captain, smiling from his teeth to his eye-lids. "Why, the fog seems to have done you good, madam."

"It is a novelty, Captain Deighton, and we women would rather have painful novelty than luxurious sameness."

"No, no, not all of you."

"A material obstacle—and this fog is a *very* material obstacle—to enjoyment, puts me on my heroical temper, and brings 'the fight' out of me. There's no danger, I suppose."

"Pooh!—in a fog like this!—how should there be?"

"But we are coming to the most dangerous

part of the voyage," Felicia responded, speaking in a very low tone, so that her words might not alarm her fellow-passengers.

"Well, well, Miss Avalon, there's danger everywhere. You may find it in the feather-bed of a first-floor bed-room in a fire-proof house. It may be rough and black yet awhile, but don't you let anything frighten you."

"I am not easily frightened."

"And whatever squalls rise, remember that 'The Mary Queen' has been in as bad before hundreds of times, and yet never came to harm."

When Fay had given Felix his revenge in another game of besique, which he won by the last card, whilst his antagonist stood at 960, she drew him away from the table to the circular couch at the end of the saloon, where they held the following conversation in low tones, without any risk of being overheard.

"I shall act on Captain Deighton's counsel."

"And wear one of my coats?"

"Yes, Felix. Let me have an entire suit."

"Nonsense, Fay."

"I mean it. The coat and waistcoat will be

delightfully warm; and should an accident occur to the steamer, I should like to know that I could be rid of all impeding skirts, and have as good a chance as any of you men."

"You are not acting on the captain's advice. He told you not to be alarmed."

"To take precautions against peril is not to surrender oneself to panic."

"What do you apprehend?"

"Nothing that frightens me; though I am well aware that the vessel is in a perilous case, which has to coast along Newfoundland in such a fog as this, with a strong sea rolling, and mighty currents battling with one another on the surface of the tempestuous waters."

"The 'Mary Queen' has weathered many a worse storm, and sailed out of many a thicker fog."

"Never a thicker—that is impossible."

"If we run upon a reef, it will not help you much to wear a man's dress."

"Perhaps not. But if we should have to take to the boats, I should like to know that no skirts and petticoats would hinder me, in case it

became necessary for me to leap for my life out of a boat and swim to the nearest rock. Any how, there will be no impropriety in my wearing a suit of your clothes under my own dress."

Seeing that, if the alteration of apparel should be of no other benefit to her, it might give her confidence at a moment of hazardous emergency, Felix complied with her request, and having paid a visit to his sleeping-cabin, returned in a few minutes with a bag, containing the clothes which she asked for.

Taking the apparel with her, Fay Avalon retired to the ladies' quarters, and spent the next half hour in divesting herself of her own raiment, and in clothing herself in the dark Oxford mixture trousers, black waistcoat, and long clerical frock coat which her brother had lent her.

The toilet was performed by the light of a taper, which Martha, slightly scandalized, but at the same time amused by her mistress's proceedings, held for Fay's convenience, in the narrow sleeping-cabin which contained the berths of the two women.

When she had completed the first part of her

toilet, Fay was so delighted with the effect of the disguise, that she despatched Martha to bring Felix to see her in clerical costume, before she put some of her appropriate attire over the masculine habiliments. The completeness of the masquerade was all the more astonishing because the discipline which her hair had undergone in prison occasioned her to be wearing just such a crop of short, loose, unbraided hair as one sometimes sees in society on the head of an eccentric lady. No stranger would have suspected her sex, or questioned that she was a young and decidedly handsome Anglican clergyman.

On being led by Martha to the ladies' saloon, and smuggled into his sister's sleeping-cabin, Felix could not forbear from laughing at the transformation wrought in Fay's appearance. From the crown of her head to the heels of her stout Balmoral boots, Fay's masquerade was perfect. The plain white cravat, high-collared waistcoat buttoned to the throat over her defectively-fashioned chest, the dark hair of her crop, the long frock and dark nether integu-

ments became her admirably, and rendered her strong resemblance to her delicately-moulded brother more remarkable than ever.

"I don't know which of you is which, or whether either of you isn't the other," Martha observed, as she relieved Fay of the taper, which the pitching of the steamer rendered it incumbent on one or the other of them to hold.

"But you'll be so prodigiously large," Felix remarked, after recovering from the astonishment and merriment that Fay's altered appearance caused him, "when you have hidden the false feathers under your proper plumage."

"Not at all. When I shall slip a single petticoat, my loose travelling robe, and my fur mantle over this reverend gear, I shall look precisely as I did an hour since. When I go on deck in the fog, I shall put my waterproof cloak over all. And now, sir, you must be off, for it is against the rules of this floating house for a gentleman to enter the quarters of the female passengers."

Felix was about to squeeze himself through the half-opened door of the minute apartment,

when Fay checked him by saying, "Wait a moment—what is this in the breast-pocket of the coat?"

"My large pocket-book," was the answer.

"It *is* a large one."

"It contains our money, the broker's voucher for our stock in the Funds and some letters—amongst other papers, my letters of ordination, and one or two other important documents."

"You had better take possession of it."

"No, it must remain where it is. The breast-pocket of the coat I am wearing is not quite large enough to hold the book."

"Then we had better change coats."

"No, for the coat you are wearing is more closely made than the one on my back, and therefore more suitable for use as one of your under-garments. The pocket-book will be as safe with you as with me."

Felix was on the point of adding, "If you perish, Fay, on this voyage, I shall perish with you; in which case, neither of us will need the pocket-book or its contents." But he remembered himself in time to withhold words which

would have frightened Martha, who, unaware of the perils of the fog, was under the impression that her mistress's change of dress had been made solely for warmth's sake.

The day wore on without any clearing off of the fog. There was the usual dinner in the saloon, at which, however, comparatively few passengers were present, the roughness of the sea having prostrated in sea-sickness several of the men, and all the women, with the exception of Fay and Martha. Night came; but its arrival was announced only by the time-pieces, for its advent added nothing to the darkness that had prevailed for several hours. Fay Avalon sat up with her brother after all the other passengers had crept away to their berths; and when she retired to her narrow bed shortly before midnight, she was not disposed to sleep. She dozed, no doubt, for, on the following morning, the night appeared to have passed quickly; but from the time of her down-lying to the hour of her up-rising, it seemed to her that she had never ceased to hear the tread of the sailors on deck and the blowing of the fog-

horns. But though she had scarcely any unbroken slumber, and was convinced that danger of shipwreck beset the steamer on every side, she was not unhappy. All her melancholy had fled. She thought several times of Major Tilbury, but not vindictively. Examining her conscience, she asked herself if she forgave her enemy as a Christian woman ought to forgive her earthly adversaries, and she was assured that she was more desirous of his reformation than his punishment. It seemed to her that, if 'The Mary Queen' were to perish, together with its tenants, ere the morning, she would be in God's keeping, and that it would be pleasant in such a guiltless manner to escape from her burden of shame.

When the first-class passengers assembled the next morning at the breakfast-table, they showed no signs of terror or depression, though the fog was as thick as ever. The knowledge that at any moment they might emerge from the wilderness of darkness into bright sunlight sustained their spirits. Moreover, the weather had in some respects changed for the better.

The heavy rain had ceased, and though the sea was still high and riotous, its fury had considerably abated. After breakfast, several of the saloon passengers went upstairs, and, moving cautiously about the deck, found that the fog, though intensely cold, was not otherwise afflicting to the bodily senses.

Captain Deighton maintained his cheery deportment whenever he conversed with any of his passengers; but when he entered the saloon cabin at the breakfast hour, and seated himself in the full light of the lamp, Felicia Avalon saw marks of anxiety in his bluff, jovial countenance. And, truth to tell, the captain was not gravely reprehensible for being unable to conceal his concern from her searching eyes. During the night he had heard the fog-bells on the Gandergrisse—a fact that confirmed in an alarming manner his calculations respecting the course of the vessel, which the irresistible currents of the ocean had borne away from her proper line.

The day passed, however, without catastrophe.

It was not so with the ensuing night.

Shortly before five A.M. every sleeping occupant of a berth in 'The Mary Queen' was roused roughly by a terrific shock that made the boat shiver and shake in every timber, hurled a seaman overboard beyond every chance of recovery, and threw upon their faces three other sailors who were pacing the wet and slippery deck. Those who were awake at the moment of the collision had nothing more than the sleepers to tell about the accident, which was all the work of a single instant. A pause, during which the winds and waves were alone audible, followed the shock, and preceded the Babel's uproar of screams and wild ejaculations that rose from every part of the vessel. Fay Avalon and Martha, who had both climbed into their berths in the clothing which they meant to wear on the following day, were on their feet and in the saloon in a trice, the one exclaiming, "Felix, we are here," whilst the latter called loudly for her "master." Martha's master soon found her, and bade her, with authoritative kindness, to keep calm and make no noise.

"We are as much in God's keeping here as ever we were on land," the young clergyman observed as, covering the women with his arms, he pushed them in the direction of the cabin stair-case, which was invisible, for the shock had shattered the cabin lamp, and extinguished every light under the decks.

"We are on a reef," said Fay, "and the engines have stopped. The water has got to the fires."

"I suppose so," was Felix Avalon's answer, as Fay's suggestion was caught up by her hearers and repeated in every note of despair and consternation.

"The vessel is moving," cried another voice in the darkness.

"Yes, to be drifted again upon the reef," exclaimed three or four voices simultaneously.

At that moment Captain Deighton called down the ladder, "Keep order—mind, don't crowd—but come up all of you. The boats will be ready in a minute."

"Captain Deighton, can you give us a light? We are in darkness."

"Surely, Mr. Avalon," the captain answered, recognizing the speaker's voice. "Keep where you are."

Thus speaking, Captain Deighton swung himself down the stair-case, and putting his bull's-eye lantern, taken from his belt, in the hands of Felix Avalon, exclaimed, "I give my light to Mr. Avalon, and all of you obey him. When he calls to you to keep back, instantly fall back. When he says 'Come on,' come forward, but don't crowd. Bring them on deck, Mr. Avalon, and make them stand together till I tell them off for the boats."

Before Felix had fairly grasped the lamp, and heard his orders, Captain Deighton was returning to his men, who were none too many for their work, having already lost a pair of hands by the shock.

To the credit of the luckless passengers it must be recorded that they were unanimously obedient to the orders of the clergyman who had been commissioned to command them.

"Women and children go on deck first," exclaimed Felix. "Fay, take the women as they reach the top of the ladder, and place them to-

gether with the children on the right hand of the cabin entrance. Now, gentlemen, let us be sure that we leave none of the women and children behind. Englishmen never fall into panic."

Had the persons in the two chief cabins made an ugly rush for the passage by which they could ascend to the deck, they were numerous enough to have caused a fatal blocking of the way. But the obedience with which Felix Avalon's orders were carried out saved the passengers from that misfortune.

Fay went up the staircase first, Martha following close behind. The women with children came next, each mother testifying, as she passed Felix, that her children were with her. Then the rest of the women without children followed.

"Now, gentlemen, your turn has come," cried Felix. "Don't crowd. You'll have to wait some minutes on deck before the boats are ready for you. Each of you will shake hands with me as you pass."

And as each man passed Felix he received a pressure of the hand from the young clergyman —a courteous and polite arrangement, that had

the desired effect of preventing the men from pushing forwards too fast.

It was no wreck to give occasion or opportunity for dramatic scenes and theatrical conduct; for the darkness rendered it impossible for anyone to see a foot before his nose without the help of a lantern. Mothers doubtless murmured prayers over their offspring as they held them to their limbs on the sloppy boards. Husbands clasped tenderly the hands of their partners in the battle of life. But gloom and blackness covered everything that in the light might have been a pitiful spectacle, or an unobtrusive display of fortitude. The lamps which the seamen wore in their belts were now and then visible; and Felix Avalon's bull's-eye threw a current of light here and there, as he moved about, helping people to find their friends in the huddled knot of expectant wretches; but the lights, contrasting vividly with the surrounding darkness, gave no general view of the position.

Fortunately no waves broke over the filling vessel whilst her occupants were making ready to desert her. The rage of the sea had subsided

considerably, but the swell was such that even with a good light the work of getting out the boats, manning them, and depositing in them two or three dozen persons unprovided with sea-legs, would have been a difficult and dangerous task.

Things, however, are sometimes done wonderously well under unfavourable circumstances; and Captain Deighton and his mate succeeded in moving every passenger from the foundering ship to one or other of the two boats, without injury to bone or skin, in spite of the darkness and the force of the waters. The crew were no less fortunate than the passengers. Everything which presence of mind, forethought, and seaman-like expertness could accomplish for the success of the operations, was done by Captain Deighton and his subordinates. Neither of the boats started without a week's supply of provisions. Each of them was furnished with an adequate number of life-belts. The captain took command of one boat, his mate of another; and as the boats were nearly of the same size, the two parties, on pulling away from the

steamer in cheerless silence, were alike strong with seamen and passengers.

Like the good, trusty fellow that he was, Captain Deighton remained on 'The Mary Queen' till every other human creature had left her, and then, when he had done his duty on the steamer, and was urgently needed in the boat to which the Avalons and Martha had descended, they scarcely knew how, John Deighton, after muttering a farewell to his old craft, took a leap in the direction of his seaman's lights, and came plump down into the vessel, in which he did not even yet despair of escaping from the jaws of death.

Having found his seat at the end of the boat, where Felix and Fay and Martha were nestling together, he gave the word to the seamen to pull away from 'The Mary Queen,' which, after rebounding from the rock that gave her her death wound, had been fast filling with water.

"Where are you going, captain?" Fay inquired.

"God knows, Miss Avalon," the captain an-

swered piously, "I don't. We are in His hands, and where better can his creatures be? Let us pray, Mr. Avalon, each to himself and for himself, 'Guide us, Heavenly Father, guide us!"

John Deighton was silent for two or three minutes, as he mentally repeated the words of the hymn, dear to the heart of many a God-fearing English seaman, that opens,

"Guide us, Heavenly Father, guide us,
O'er the wild, tempestuous sea;
Keep us, guard us, lead us, feed us,
For our hope is all on Thee.
Still possessing every blessing,
If our God our Father be."

There was none other on whom those wrecked wayfarers could rely.

"We must get away from the poor dear 'Mary Queen,'" the captain explained, for the information of listeners at his end of the boat, "and leave her to founder or stick upon a reef. This boat will float safely over rocks that would tear open the keel of a large vessel of deeper draught. The fog may clear off to-morrow, and we may find ourselves near land—near a port perhaps. Who knows? God does. Let

us be silent, and pray now. By-and-by we'll sing a hymn together."

Thus, in the darkness of an impenetrable fog, the occupants of the boat went onwards over reefs and past countless islets of ragged rock, collision against any one of which would have sent them into the next world. Thus they glided onwards, moved by the currents of the sea rather than the labour of the oarsmen, going, the Lord, and He alone, knew whither!

CHAPTER XXIX.

ONE LIFE SAVED.

SOME ten days after the last of the events recorded in the last chapter, intelligence reached Quebec of the wreck of 'The Mary Queen,' and of the fate of the boat which had left the foundering steamer under the command of Captain Deighton. The captain had perished; every one of the crew and passengers who accompanied the captain in the open boat had found a watery grave, with the exception of the Reverend Felix Avalon. Captain and seamen, together with all the other adventurers in the luckless craft, had found death in the sea off Newfoundland, with the single exception of Foxe Avalon's son.

An old woman, named Catharine Ducroix—

an Irishwoman by birth, who had married years ago one of the French gendarmes stationed on the Little Miquelon—was walking on Langley Beach, almost within sight of the summer villa of the commandant of St. Pierre, when she descried a human form which the retiring tide had left on the wet sand. On examining this object she found it to be the apparently lifelees body of a gentleman, clothed after the fashion of English clergymen. The body was extended, with its face downwards, its feet towards the sea, its head towards the cliffs, its arms thrown forward in a way attributable to the life-belt of the cast-away, when the aged female came upon it at an early hour of the morning. On turning over what appeared to be the corpse of a shipwrecked voyager, Catharine Ducroix ascertained that the breast-pocket of the long clerical coat, and one of the skirt-pockets of the same article of dress, contained things of weight, bulk, and value. Having taken possession of these chattels, not with a view to plunder, but for the honest preservation of the property, Catharine Ducroix washed the sand from

the face of the corpse. Something in the appearance of the features caused her for a minute or two to think that life was not quite extinct; and under this impression she wetted the interior of the lips with brandy, and through the slightly separated rows of teeth poured a little of the spirit into the mouth of the inanimate clergyman. Having removed the life-belt, she placed the body flat on its back. She also brought a mass of sea-weed, and put it under the head of the prostrate form, to serve for a pillow. But the woman's hope that his animation was recoverable did not last long; and when she had satisfied herself that he was unquestionably dead, she left him lying on his back, with his head supported by the sea-weed, and retraced her steps to the station where she lived with her daughter, who, following her mother's example, had married a French gendarme.

Having informed her daughter and son-in-law that a gentleman was lying dead on the beach, Catharine Ducroix urged them to assist her in bringing the corpse to their dwelling,

a proposal in which the man and younger woman (Jean and Annette Legendre) cordially acquiesced. Without delay, Catharine set out again for the beach, attended by her children, who meant to have carried the dead body back with them. But to their astonishment and delight, on arriving at the spot where they expected to find a corpse, they saw the Reverend Felix Avalon sitting on the knot of sea-weed which had shortly before been his pillow, and staring around him at the melancholy ocean and high cliffs. Thanks to Catharine Ducroix, who had laid him in a favourable position, he had recovered consciousness and the partial use of his limbs during her absence. The good people informed the rescued clergyman where he was, explained to him that the property taken from his pockets was in honest hands, and urged him to accompany them to their dwelling, where they would treat him hospitably. Mr. Avalon accepted their invitation, and, though greatly exhausted, was well enough to accompany them on foot to their small house —a distance of rather more than a mile. He

rested in Jean Legendre's bed whilst his clothes were being washed and dried; partook thankfully of the nutriment promptly provided for him at the station; and after fifteen hours of unbroken sleep found himself so far restored by the hospitality of his entertainers that he could proceed to the commandant's house, and narrate the circumstances of the wreck of 'The Mary Queen.' The Reverend Felix Avalon dined with the commandant, who was fortunately residing at his summer villa, but returned in the evening to Jean Legendre's habitation for another good night's rest. On the third morning after his discovery on Langley Beach, Mr. Avalon was sent in the commandant's yacht to St. John's, Newfoundland, where he became the governor's guest immediately upon his arrival at the capital of the British island.

The Quebec papers, together with these and other minute particulars respecting Felix Avalon's escape, contained the clergyman's narrative of the loss of the steamer, and the subsequent misfortunes of his fellow-adventurers in Captain Deighton's boat. But this narrative,

though it was intensely exciting to hundreds of thousands of readers in the autumn of 1862, tells nothing that would justify its insertion in these pages. The perusers of this work, are already in possession of the principal facts which Mr. Avalon put on record concerning the last voyage of 'The Mary Queen,' from the time when she was caught in a fog till her desertion. With respect to events that transpired between his escape from the sinking steamer and his discovery on the sands of Little Miquelon, the miserable narrator, whose only sister was one of the victims of the calamity, had not much to say. Captain Deighton's boat had floated about in the fog for fifty-six hours, during which time the occupants of the craft partook of their sufficient supply of food, and repeatedly raised their spirits by singing the hymn, the opening verse of which has been given in the last chapter. The captain led the singers, who were for awhile greatly cheered and soothed by every repetition of the psalm. But in spite of all the captain's efforts to keep heart in his companions, their spirits sunk to despondency

during the last twelve of the fifty-six hours. Some of the men, as well as of the women and children, succumbing to the coldness of fog and the terrors of their position, fell into a state of sullen stupor verging on absolute unconsciousness. Then, as the fog appeared to be growing less dense, a violent squall upset the boat—the last incident in the long series of disasters of which Mr. Avalon had a clear recollection. What became of his fellow-passengers, after they were dispersed in the sea, he was, of course, unable to say. He remembered that he and they had warnings that the gale would capsize the craft. He remembered that several of them, who had not sooner put on their life-belts, did so at the Captain's exhortation, when the wind rose to its final fit of fury. He could recall how he, in the last moments before the water swept over the craft, busied himself in slipping off his great-coat and waterproof cape, which would have impeded his endeavours to save himself, and in drawing a circular buoy up under his arms. It remained in his memory that he was frustrated, by an irresistible billow, in his endeavour to

clutch hold of his sister's dress as the boat upset. But he recollected nothing more until he regained consciousness on the strand of Little Miqnelon. Respecting the fate of the other boat, and its freight of luckless beings, he could say nothing more than that he feared they had perished in the tumultuous waters.

Great was the excitement which the tragic narrative caused in Quebec and throughout Canada. Every tongue spoke, every pen wrote about the catastrophe of 'The Mary Queen.' The preachers of the pulpits, and the journalists of the colonial press, descanted on the awful occurrence. Towards the survivor of the wreck social opinion softened, and grew almost generous. He was a young man of talent and zeal. Nothing had ever transpired to justify the once prevalent opinion that he was an accomplice to his sister's wrong-doings, for which he deserved unqualified commiseration. Affection for his erring sister had made him cling to her in her disgrace; and it was hoped that he would derive consolation in his horrible bereavement from a knowledge of the sympathy universally

expressed for him by his old friends in Canada. But though she could never again trouble them with satire or falsehood, and had encountered a doleful fate, that might be regarded as the excessive punishment of her misdeeds, the world exhibited no tenderness for Felix Avalon's sister. The wounds which she was believed to have administered to the pride of families, to the honour of individuals, to the jealous self-love of religious parties, were too recent and deep for the announcement of her death to heal them, or even to mitigate their pain.

For days and weeks it was hoped in Canada that another survivor of the wreck of 'The Mary Queen' would appear. But the hope was not fulfilled. All that the friends of the persons who perished in the disaster ever learnt about the tragic affair was gleaned from the published statement which Felix Avalon was certified to have made to the authorities of St. John's, Newfoundland, before he proceeded on his way to England by a steamer, bound for Liverpool, that touched at St. John's on the third day after his arrival in the island.

The excitement at Quebec was transient, so far as the general public were concerned; but there was one person in the city whom Felicia Avalon's fate filled with horror and remorse, that corresponded in their vehemence and cowardice with the malignity of his previous hatred of her. The deplorable effects wrought in the temper and spirit of their "manly" friend by the wreck of 'The Mary Queen' became a frequent topic of conversation with the officers of the garrison. Again and again they rallied round their "good old Joe," bidding him "cheer up," and "never say die;" but the comforters, who had seemed so successful in reconciling him to the heartless flirt's disdain, found themselves powerless to raise him from the despondency and moroseness into which he fell immediately after hearing of the loss of the steamer. And finding his case beyond their power, it was not long ere they ceased to take a very affectionate interest in it. Instead of gossiping sentimentally about the wrongs of their "dear old Joe," they began to speak of him with disdainful compassion as a "poor devil!" and even

to regard his melancholy and its consequences as signs of the particular demoralization known by the term "loss of pluck."

Three months had passed since the wreck of 'The Mary Queen' when Dandy Trevor and Mouse Ponsford spoke in the following manner about "the wonderful change in Joe."

"He is regularly worked out," observed the Dandy. "The poor devil does not care for his horses, or his clothes, or even his grub. He has grown flabby, and boozes like a beast. The only thing he has appetite for is his liquor, which he is always sucking down. Drink will do for any man in a precious short run, who is perpetually popping at dull care from morning till night with a pocket-pistol loaded with brandy. Whilst the brandy kills him, he never even wings the care."

"It's all that infernal woman's doing," responded the Mouse, not unmindful of his own sufferings inflicted by feminine perfidy. "He loved her!"

"No doubt; and I don't blame him for loving her. But when she proved an arrant bad un,

and was sent to 'quod' for her little eccentricities, Joe should have got the better of his *penchant*—seeing, you know, that events had proved him to have loved, not the woman herself, but what he had imagined her to be. Joe should have thought of the service, and not have gone on cherishing a sneaking fondness for a mere convict."

"If you ever happen to fall in love, Dandy, you will be less hard on the poor devil, and know that when a man's in love he isn't his own master. A fellow can't change his passion just as he can his wine."

"S'pose not. But Joe altogether deceived me. Soon after she refused him, his love seemed to turn to the most violent hate; and I should have said no man was more heartily delighted at Jezebel's conviction than her old suitor, J. C. Tilbury. I am sure he used to mention her eyes in no friendly terms. And now it appears that he was only acting a part when he used to rail at her."

"He was no hypocrite. He thought he hated her."

"And no sooner has she gone to the deuce, as he used to pray she might, than he turns glum, and drinks himself into D. T."

"Not so bad as that, Dandy."

"Every bit, on my honour. He has been drinking hard, stealthily, inordinately, these last twelve weeks. In his best days he was too fond of liquor, but since his troubles he has turned toper. I know him. You should have seen him the other night, when I found him in his room, rushing after imaginary devils, and swearing like a legion of real ones. I ran round to our doctor, Foster—deuced good fellow!—and got back just in time to save him from doing himself a mischief. When he saw me re-enter the room, he screeched out like a hyena, rushed at me, and then stopped short. I had brought up two orderlies with me, as well as the doctor, and perhaps the noise we made running upstairs had scared him. 'Quick!' I cried to the two men—'he means fighting.' And so he did, sure enough; for, after stopping suddenly in his run at me, he made for the table near the window, and snatched up a brace

of loaded pistols. 'Don't make a fool of yourself, Joe,' I said, in something like my ordinary voice; 'we don't mean to do you any harm. You're ill, man.' He would have fired, I don't doubt, if the doctor hadn't been too many for him. 'Anyhow, if you will fight, Major Tilbury, fight me fairly, and give me one of your pistols,' Foster said, keeping as cool as a cucumber, and walking straight up to him, and eyeing him much as a lion-tamer eyes a furious beast. Joe was cowed, and put one of the loaded weapons into the doctor's outstretched left hand. 'That's right,' said Foster steadily; 'now, Tilbury, let us mark off twelve paces and fight like gentlemen. There are three witnesses to see that everything is fair.' Whilst speaking in this business-like way, the doctor watched for his opportunity, and caught in his strong grip Joe's left wrist—the wrist of the hand that held his remaining weapon. Joe fortunately had given up the pistol which he had held in his right, so Foster had him at an advantage. There was a bit of a scuffle, in which Joe's pistol dropped from his hand, and

exploded as it fell on the floor. 'Lay hold of him—he's too much for me!" cried Foster, with whom Joe had closed, roaring like a savage brute. The orderlies did not like the notion of laying hands on their superior officer, but they obeyed the word of command. And it was lucky they did obey it, for I can assure you, Mouse, that the four of us were only enough to secure the maniac and get him to bed, where he was in due course provided with a straight waistcoat. He is going on all right now, sleeping his madness off under the influence of Foster's laudanum-bottle. But the doctor says it is just as sharp an attack of delirium tremens as he has ever brought a fellow through."

PART II.

UNDER THE CLOTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SQUIRE OF SUNNINGWOLD.

IN one of our inland shires, and in the middle of a region of fat farms, emparked mansions, picturesque churches, and noble landscapes, lies Sunningwold, one of the most charming villages betwixt the Tweed and the English channel. Extending from the summit of Bilbury Hill to the northern bank of the river Grill, that meanders gracefully through the vale of Sunningwold, the village holds possession of a broad, sinuous lane, every turn of which reveals to the tourist a bit of scenery or a rustic dwelling which Birket Foster would delight to paint. Its population does not exceed five hundred souls, but as, with the exception of a few rows of inferior dwellings,

each of its cosy homes and antique cottages is surrounded by a plot of garden, whilom tilled by its own freeholder or a peasant secure from ejection from his tenement at a landlord's caprice, it covers more ground than the mere statement of the number of its inhabitants would imply.

Oaks and elms stretch their arms athwart the tortuous thoroughfare, chequering in summer-time the dusty ground with restless shadows. The way widens as it approaches the spot where "The Old Soldier," the one hostelry of Sunningwold, stands in the rear of an open space, provided with a mounting-block and troughs for thirsty cattle, and adorned with a magnificent chestnut-tree, under whose whispering branches pedestrians refresh themselves in sultry seasons with the Old Soldier's sound and cheering ale. Dr. Scotchmer's garden, midway between the rustic tavern and the bottom of the hill, is one of the horticultural marvels of a district abounding with ornamental grounds. As the traveller descends to the river's marge, he sees the spire,

and roof, and high, fretted windows of Sunningwold Church flanked by the umbrageous trees that hide the pleasant parsonage. Nor will the tourist exploring the delightful spot fail to observe on his right hand, soon after he begins to loiter from the hill's summit towards the valley, the residence of Samuel Hardy Clissold, Justice of the Peace, and Deputy-Lieutenant of his county, and Squire of Sunningwold.

Sunningwold Hall is a two-storeyed, red-bricked, large-windowed mansion, separated from the village roadway by a garden some twenty yards wide, and commanding from its south-west front a superb view of the sloping lawns of Sunningwold Park, the wide valley of Ospringe, and in the distance the bold range of the Uppingham Hills. It is a modern house, but no structure of yesterday, its oldest part having been built in the days of George the First, its newest part in the first year of the present century. Time has toned down the original fierceness of its red colour; and whilst its roadward front is properly screened with

shrubs and timber, the terraces and floral grounds on the other side of the mansion demonstrate the taste and judgment of the landscape gardener who laid them out, when Hardy Clissold's grandfather was the lord of the demesne.

And never had Sunningwold Hall appeared to better advantage than it did on a certain June morning of the year 1866, when the Squire sat at his breakfast-table, together with the principal members of his household, in his mansion's lofty dining-room, whose open windows allowed the four persons who constituted the party to enjoy the rich perfumes of the gaudy garden, and catch the music of the bees humming over the nearest flower-beds.

Nor had the Squire ever appeared more thoroughly satisfied with himself and his belongings than he did on that same morning when, desisting from his rather startling performances with his knife and fork, he leaned backwards in his capacious chair, and frankly owned that he had made a capital repast. Mr. Tenniel will pardon me if I press the work of

his pencil into my service, and make it convey to my readers a vivid notion of the facial and bodily characteristics of a country gentleman, whose strong resemblance to the artist's "John Bull" occasioned the belief, general in the neighbourhood of Sunningwold, that the limner's typical English paterfamilias was an actual portrait of the Squire, taken from life in a certain autumn when the famous draughtsman passed ten days of the partridge season at Kenton Park, and came over to Sunningwold for a day's shooting. The Squire's acquaintances have no doubt as to his being the original of *Punch's* "John Bull;" and, far from being sensitive about the publicity given to his physical characteristics, Hardy Clissold prides himself not a little on having been accepted by the artist as a model of an English country gentleman. The puzzled look, the air of acuteness, the gleeful expression, the stolid, bovine countenance, the aspect of unutterable contentment, which John Bull assumes by turn in the caricatures of *Punch*, are precisely the looks with which the Squire entertains his acquaintance at Sunning-

of his benevolence and easy temper; and though the poachers of his vicinity talk of him with awe and asperity, he is free with his purse to the women and children of the culprits whom he has sent to gaol for offences against the Game Laws. Certainly he is not a learned man, for in the whole course of his life he has not read, or tried to read, a dozen books. It would be flattery to call him a wise or very sagacious man. But he is aware of his deficiencies, and knows how to conceal them by silence. When he talks, he is slightly inclined to pompousness; but that fault is overlooked by his neighbours in consideration of his sterling goodness and the genial smiles of his broad face.

"You'll call on Mr. Kinsman this morning, I suppose," observed Mrs. Porchester, a lady whose years exceeded forty-five without reaching fifty, and whose complexion was a natural healthy pink, slightly freckled and injured by the suns of India, where she had resided during the life of her husband, Colonel Porchester, of the Company's service.

Having resided in Sunningwold Hall some ten years or more as the mistress of the establishment and chaperon of Ada Clissold, the Squire's only daughter, Mrs. Porchester, without surrendering the independence of widowhood, enjoyed all the honour and influence that would have belonged to her had she been the Squire's wife. The tradesmen of the district bowed to her obsequiously; the villagers looked up to her as their Lady Bountiful. Hardy Clissold's wealthiest tenants took pains to stand well in her favour. And it cannot be denied that she was in appearance and style worthy of her high place in Sunningwold and its neighbourhood. Without possessing beauty, she had comeliness of countenance, and a figure retaining enough of its original shape to show that in her girlhood it must have been elegant. Her taste in dress was generally applauded; and as she sat at her end of the Squire's breakfast-table, no observer would have failed to notice the daintiness of her morning-cap of Irish point, the richness and excellent make of her dress of dead-leaf-coloured silk, relieved by collar and

cuffs of exquisitely fine lace. Though it was called auburn by her flatterers, her hair must have been conspicuously red, till time softened its fiery hue with white threads. Nor am I disposed to deny that a nice discerner of character might have detected some signs of a sly and calculating nature in the grey eyes and thin lips of the sleek, long-necked gentlewoman.

"Certainly, madam—I know my place," answered the Squire.

"The master of Sunningwold cannot be otherwise than in his place when he offers attention to a stranger. Still, there is the question, whether the new curate should call at the Hall to pay his respects to its inmates before you take notice of him."

"I am his churchwarden. You forget that, madam."

"True; I forgot that."

"I shall call on him this morning in my capacity of churchwarden, to give him his key of the parish-chest, show him where the registers are kept, and make him acquainted with the state of the parish."

"I hope you will ask him to dinner," put in the blue-eyed, golden-haired Ada Clissold, the Squire's eighteen-years-old daughter, of whose appearance more shall be said in another chapter. "I think he'll help to brighten us up."

"Pooh! chatterbox!" responded the Squire, regarding his daughter proudly, "you don't want to be brightened up. You are bright enough."

"I like cheerful society; and Mr. Kinsman's looks assure me that he will be a pleasant neighbour. He is very good-looking, and he gave us a capital sermon yesterday."

"Sound," said the Squire, shaking his big head as he delivered himself of this critical opinion.

"And not too long," added Ada.

"Yes," assented the Squire, adopting the young lady's amendment, "sound, and not too long."

After a pause Hardy Clissold continued,

"On the whole, I am disposed to think favourably of the young man; and if you and Mrs. Porchester approve him, after making his

acquaintance, I shall invite him to come up here frequently. It is incumbent on me as Squire and churchwarden to be civil to him."

"Hubbard took a basket of *my* eggs to the parsonage this morning," Mrs. Porchester announced. "I told him to leave them with *your* compliments."

"Most considerate of you, madam."

"It is my habit to think of those little things," replied Mrs. Porchester, taking the Squire's praise as nothing more than her due. "In girlhood I was educated in self-sacrifice, and trained to think for others."

Whereupon Hardy Clissold observed with cordial bluntness, calling Mrs. Porchester by her Christian name, as he was accustomed to do every now and then, "And upon my honour, Maria, you are a credit to your training. In the way of self-sacrifice, I don't know the woman who may be compared with you."

"You are too kind to me, Hardy," returned Mrs. Porchester, who, ever ready to sacrifice her own dignity to the happiness of her distant cousin, Hardy Clissold, never omitted to use

his Christian name in replying to him when he had called her Maria.

Perhaps Mrs. Porchester wished to encourage Mr. Clissold to adopt the familiar style of address more frequently; but she never permitted herself to recognize the existence of such a wish. The first object of her life, she assured herself in moments of severe self-examination, was to make her cousin happy. To achieve that object she would sacrifice herself to any extent. If it gave him pleasure to call her Maria, it would be selfish in her to imply disapproval of the familiarity by addressing him in return as "Mr. Clissold." Mrs. Porchester had argued this matter with herself several times in a secret court of honour where she was her own judge. And she never thought the matter over without saying in conclusion, "I will continue to sacrifice myself."

Turning his eyes to a person who must be introduced to the readers of this narrative,—a delicate boy, thirteen years old, Hardy Clisshold inquired, "And what are you thinking about, Master Jemmy?"

The couch on which he reclined at the breakfast-table, and the delicacy of his pensive countenance, betokened that Jemmy was an invalid. The steel of certain surgical apparatus, just visible at his ankles beneath his trousers, indicated that he was a patient under orthopœdic treatment; but the cast of his aquiline profile and the expression of his large, dark eyes showed that, though he lacked physical vigour, the boy was not the victim of mental deficiency.

"I was thinking about my education, papa," was Jemmy's answer.

"To be sure. Now that you've grown a strong, hearty fellow," replied the father, whose humour it was to persuade himself that his heir had altogether outgrown the infirmities of his childhood, "the time has come for us to think of your education."

"You said that you would look out for a tutor for me."

"No doubt, Jemmy; and so I will."

"You haven't found one yet?"

"No," answered the Squire, assuming the

particular look that always came over his countenance when he was critically considering the points of a horse or other beast, "but I have my eye out for one. At present I haven't seen exactly the right animal, but when I do come across the right bit of stock—" Hardy Clissold paused for a few moments whilst imagining the shape and action of the pedagogic creature which he needed; and then, winking his right eye and nodding his ponderous head sagaciously, he concluded his speech by adding, "why, then, I'll buy it!"

"You can't buy a tutor, papa," Master Jemmy objected, smiling at his father's declaration.

"No, boy," the father answered good-humouredly, "but I can buy his services, and that's much the same as buying him."

"I wish," replied Jemmy, "that you would buy the services of the Reverend Felix Kinsman."

"Whew!—what a notion! Who put it into your head?"

"My head makes its own notions. Or my heart and head together make them. It is not so very strange that, knowing your intention to

find a teacher for me, I should think of the new clergyman for my tutor."

"Umph!—I must think about that," observed paterfamilias, in a tone which indicated no repugnance to the proposal. "But I mayn't be in a hurry. I can scarcely be said to have seen Mr. Kinsman yet, for I have only seen him in his surplice and gown. I must look him all round, mark his points, have him trotted out, before——"

Squire Clissold paused, for, though he had spoken deliberately, his speech had outrun his mental paces.

Ada finished his sentence by saying, to her brother's manifest amusement, "Before you can decide to *buy him!*"

Whereat Hardy Clissold laughed heartily for the best part of a minute, before he made a humorous feint of reproving the saucy girl, who never pleased her sire more than when she was innocently impudent to him. "What, Miss Minx, laughing at your old father again! I'll put you in the corner, or send you to bed."

"Mr. Kinsman would make me a capital

tutor, I am sure," Jemmy persisted, inferring from his father's good-humour that he should have his wish. "I have taken stock of his points!"

"Have you? What are they?"

"He is very good-looking, papa."

"Um!—not for a man. Hang me, if he is not almost as much like a woman as a man. He hasn't so much as a shadow of whisker on either of his cheeks."

"Either of his cheeks!" interposed Ada, designing to help her brother by another sally of impudence. "You speak as though you would like him better if he had a whisker on only one of them."

"There's the corner, Ada, and you'll be in it in another minute, if you don't take care," retorted the giant, pointing to one of the corners of the dining-room with a fore-finger as thick as the candle of a carriage-lamp.

Turning once more to his son, after quelling Ada for the moment with this terrible menace, the Squire continued, "I don't believe, Jemmy, the fellow has ever had a razor to his face in his

whole life, or will ever want to have one."

"All the better for his little girls, when he shall have some, and they come to be kissed by him. I know some one whose rough, bristling chin is not at all agreeable to his little daughter when he scrubs her with it."

"You won't be quiet: you will be punished! Very good. I'll wait till the evening, and then, Miss Minx, when my beard has grown again, I'll scrub—I'll scrub you! There shan't be a particle of skin left on either of your saucy cheeks."

"In the meantime, whilst you are comparatively harmless, and not altogether dreadful, I'll kiss—I'll kiss you!"

And suiting her action to her words, eighteen-years-old Ada rose from her chair, and putting both of her small, soft hands on her father's forehead, kissed him most daintily on his eyelids and lips.

This pretty piece of acting completed, Ada retired to a chair away from the breakfast-table, and left Jemmy to pursue his object in his own way.

"Mr. Kinsman has not any whiskers," said

the boy; "but, if he had, I don't suppose that they would make him any better able to teach me Latin and Greek. I will tell you what he has, though, papa. He has a noble, clever face, and very kind eyes, and such a glorious voice, that to listen to it is to hear music. Moreover, there's a sadness in his looks that draws me to him. I think he has been taught by trouble to be considerate for the troubled. I am sure he would be patient with me, and not like me the less for being——"

Jemmy was on the point of saying "a cripple," or "weakling," but out of respect to his sire's sensitiveness on the subject of his son's deformity and feebleness, he merely added "for being less strong than I should like to be."

It was observable, sadly observable, that Jemmy's talk was altogether innocent of the smart phrases and pungent slang of the speech of vigorous schoolboys. He had never lived with lads of his own age, contending and gossiping with them. The young Etonians and Harrovians, whom he occasionally encountered during their holidays, were civil, attentive, com-

passionate to him, but never "chummed" with him. His only young playmate was his sister, senior to him by five years. His chief teachers were novels, read greedily, and pondered over, with all the acute delights and pains of imaginative excitement, in his many hours of solitariness. It was no wonder then the clever, gentle, thoughtful boy talked more like an amiable girl than a thirteen years old English lad.

"Pshaw!" responded the Squire, wincing even under this delicate allusion to physical infirmity, which he was always vainly trying not to see, "you have come on wonderfully this last year. Another twelve months, and you'll be playing foot-ball."

"We'll play together, father, and Mr. Kinsman shall be umpire."

"Well, well, I'll think about it."

"About Mr. Kinsman?"

Facing round to Mrs. Porchester, the Squire deferentially asked her for her opinion of the boy's proposal.

"Jemmy ought to have a tutor," answered Mrs. Porchester.

"Precisely *my own view*," responded Hardy Clissold, who had received the view some six weeks before from Mrs. Porchester herself.

"He requires one—for his mental welfare and personal comfort."

"Precisely my opinion, madam. Your judgment is admirable."

"And certainly the curate of a young gentleman's parish," continued Mrs. Porchester, who had in her day managed men far more difficult to govern than the easy-tempered Squire, "is, under ordinary circumstances, a very fit person to be that young gentleman's tutor. From Mr. Kinsman's looks and style, I think that you would do well to consider Jemmy's proposal. Jemmy wants a tutor. Anything that I can do in the way of self-sacrifice for his benefit, I shall always be eager to accomplish; but I need not blush to say that I am not qualified to be his tutor."

"Then," said the Squire, "I'll engage Kinsman this very morning."

"It doesn't follow, because you wish to engage him, that he will care to be engaged, papa," suggested Ada.

"Confound it, puss, he can't refuse," retorted the astonished Hardy Clissold, who could scarcely comprehend that any person in Sunningwold had a natural right to decline to perform anything which the Squire of that parish requested him to do. "He is *my* curate. I am lay-rector. Old Pilkington has only the small tithes. I wish they were smaller, for he lives a hundred miles off, and never spends ten pounds in a year for the good of my villagers."

"Courtesy, of course," Mrs. Porchester observed, "would forbid your papa to address Mr. Kinsman on the matter, as though it were not in a clergyman's own province to choose his own way of employing his leisure time. But so considerate and courteous a man as your papa may be trusted to show our new curate every respect. It is just possible that Mr. Kinsman has plenty to do with his time, even in this parish, where the clerical duty is very light. It may be that his family and social connections

would dispose him to decline a tutorship as beneath his dignity."

"Oh! I had not thought of that!" the Squire exclaimed. "I wish I had your knowledge of the world, Maria."

"Thank you, Hardy; my knowledge of the world is not much, but my habit of thinking for others enables me to read character and see positions. But even though Mr. Kinsman might not care to take an ordinary tutorship, he might be glad, and even proud to be Jemmy's tutor. To be tutor of your heir, Mr. Clissold, is to hold no mean office."

Smiling sadly whilst speaking lightly, Jemmy observed, "I must be an important personage. I hope I shan't grow proud."

"And so you are an important personage, Jemmy," rejoined Mrs. Porchester, raising her voice slightly above its usual mild tone. "You are—the heir of Sunningwold."

Whereat, as his heart suddenly recognized its own sadness, Jemmy was on the point of saying aloud, "Poor heir!"

"Eh," said the Squire, rising from his seat and thereby breaking up the breakfast-table conclave, "you are *my* heir, and when I die you'll be master of Sunningwold, with not a shilling less than three thousand a year."

Having delivered which announcement, not for the first time, to his domestic circle, Squire Clissold pushed a big fist in each pocket of his summerly white-duck trousers, and surveyed the pleasant prospect, which sooner or later he would look at for the last time.

"I am very lucky to be your son, papa," Jemmy observed, as Mr. Clissold, after completing his survey of the landscape, visible from his dining-room windows, passed the boy's couch on his way out of the room.

"Eh, eh," the father assented, stopping for a few moments to pat the lad's head affectionately, "you are lucky in that respect. And you are a dear, good boy. But you should either get some longer trowsers, or keep those you have on well down upon your feet. I don't like to see those steel thingummies—they are ugly things—uncommon ugly things!"

After uttering this parting injunction, the Squire moved slowly onwards and out of the dining-room.

CHAPTER II.

SQUIRE CLISSOLD CALLS ON THE NEW CURATE.

WHEN Hardy Clissold's white-duck trousers, light holland coat and waistcoat, straw hat, and rather florid face, were seen slowly descending the hill, children playing in cottage-gardens, and women busying themselves over washtubs in their front yards, moved towards the palings of their enclosures, or came out into the road in expectation of the civil greetings which their lord was wont to bestow on the vassals of his petty dominion. And as he slowly wended his way to the parsonage, with a nod and a smile for every woman who made him an obeisance, and an assurance of his perfect confidence in their moral rectitude for every group of sun-tanned infants who pulled fore-

locks or "bopped" to their feudal chief, the huge, broad-shouldered Squire was an object for benevolent humorists to regard with affectionate admiration.

The Squire's walk effected its purpose.

On entering the parsonage-grounds he was spared the trouble of asking if the clergyman was at home, by Mr. Kinsman himself, who, rising from a chair under a spreading beech-tree, came forward to greet his visitor, just as the latter was about to pull the bell-handle of the vicarage's front door.

The greeting was cordial on both sides. Mr. Kinsman was delighted to shake hands with the Squire, whom he had had the pleasure of seeing in the congregations at church on the previous day. Hardy Clissold, expressing the same sentiment of delight, was glad to have an opportunity of thanking Mr. Kinsman for an excellent sermon. Admitting that he liked sermons to be sound and brief, the Squire was glad to have ascertained by experience that Mr. Kinsman could preach sermons of unassailable soundness and proper brevity. No; the Squire

would not enter the parsonage, which the clergyman represented to be scarcely ready for the reception of so august a visitor, but would take a seat under the tree, beneath whose branches Mr. Kinsman had been breakfasting.

"And," added Mr. Kinsman politely, when he had provided his visitor with a sufficiently capacious seat, and stated that the boughs and foliage above them had half-an-hour before covered his tea-pot and bread-and-butter, "I have to thank Mrs. Clissold for a basket of new-laid eggs."

"No, sir, excuse me. There is no Mrs. Clissold. I have the ill-luck to be a widower."

Mr. Kinsman apologized. His servant had informed him that the eggs came from the Hall. As such presents were usually made by the lady of the house, he had inferred rather hastily, but not unreasonably, that he was indebted to Mrs. Clissold for the eggs. Further, the clergyman confessed that he had concluded from insufficient data that the lady, whom he had observed in the Squire's pew on the previous day, toge-

ther with a young lady and her brother, was Mrs. Clissold.

"No," said the Squire; "she is my distant cousin, who has been good enough to take care of my children and keep my house for the last ten years—ever since I became a widower. You needn't accuse yourself of paining me by calling to my memory an old sorrow. Time takes the edge off all grief, and my dear wife is in heaven, sir. I am as sure of that as I am that I am first man in Sunningwold. So far as my children and house are concerned, Mrs. Porchester is all that my wife could be, if she were here on earth, instead of up aloft. It was Mrs. Porchester who thought of sending you the eggs."

"It was very thoughtful and kind of her," observed Mr. Kinsman.

"Ay, ay," rejoined the Squire, "and just like her. When you come to know her, you'll find Mrs. Porchester a very remarkable woman."

Mr. Kinsman having intimated that he was prepared to think highly of Mrs. Porchester, his

visitor proceeded to speak still more emphatically of the lady's merits.

"Every woman almost, sir," he said, "has a quality—a strong point. Mrs. Porchester's strong point is self-sacrifice. She is always sacrificing herself. You'd be surprised if I told you all the ways in which she has sacrificed herself for me, who have just no claim on her, being no more than her distant cousin. A woman who has never had children of her own seldom takes strongly to the children of another woman, but for my sake Mrs. Porchester made an effort to cotton to my children, and she loves them as though they were her own. She was meant by nature to shine in society; she has in her time been a high stepper in brilliant circles in India long ago; she likes town-life and fashion, which I don't; but here she has been for ten years in my quiet house, sacrificing herself for my good. When she was a girl, it was just the same. In fact, Mr. Kinsman, she is a phenomenon of self-sacrifice."

Perhaps the faintest possible smile was discernible in Mr. Kinsman's face whilst his visitor

expatiated in this simple fashion on Mrs. Porchester's distinguishing virtue; but no fairly shrewd observer would have failed to detect in that same countenance indications that the young clergyman was conceiving a strong good-will towards the portly Squire.

Nor was it less evident from Squire Clissold's features and communicativeness that his favourable disposition towards the new clergyman was rapidly gaining strength.

"You've come from London?" Hardy Clissold inquired.

"Yes; for the last two years I have held a curacy in Clerkenwell."

"Umph!—I don't know that I ever was there."

"Very probably you never were. It is near Smithfield."

"Oh! I am with you! To be sure. A fine market near you, but not an over-pleasant place to live in."

"I expect to find Sunningwold more to my taste. The neighbourhood of Smithfield has been the scene of trying labours with me."

"I have sent a good many beasts there." The speaker's broad face became radiant with triumph as he added—"Sunningwold stock bears a goodish character in Smithfield. Why, Mr. Kinsman, I have carried off eight prizes for fat stock at Smithfield Cattle Show."

"Indeed, sir!" ejaculated Mr. Kinsman, at a loss how to manifest sufficient interest in the Squire's triumphs.

"But mayhap you don't care about stock?"

"Indeed I do. My pleasure in looking at really good beasts often took me round Smithfield on market-days, amongst the butchers and drovers."

"There, now," exclaimed the Squire, infinitely delighted, "I can believe it! By the way you preached yesterday I was sure that you were something better than a mere parson."

"That is scarcely a compliment for one of my profession to receive with thanks," the clergyman rejoined gravely.

Colouring crimson at the mild reproof, the Squire protested—"Don't think, sir, that I don't value and honour 'the cloth.' Quite the

reverse, I assure you. I am a sound, true blue, never-surrender Church of England man, sound to the marrow. I haven't learning, but my principles are all right. I hate a pogram" (Hardy Clissold's term for dissenter) "as much as I do a poacher or a radical; and radicals, poachers, and pograms are the only kinds of human creatures that I detest. I should like to knock them all on the head, like so many vermin, and I would begin with the pograms."

Mr. Kinsman could only express satisfaction at the excellence of the Squire's principles.

"You weren't born in London, though?" the Squire inquired, after a pause.

"No."

"I thought not. You haven't the look of a Londoner."

"I am more of a countryman than a cockney."

"It isn't exact etiquette to ask you," observed the Squire, who had a countryman's curiosity about the strange clergyman. "But I am Squire of the parish, so you won't think it outrageous for me to ask you in what part of the country you were born."

"I was born in Canada."

"You don't say so! A good game country?"

"Exceedingly good."

"Squires all strict preservers, eh?—and no fellow allowed to shoot without a license?"

Mr. Kinsman explained that game was so abundant in Canada that there was no need to preserve it, or to prohibit poor folk from killing as much of it as they liked.

The Squire was amazed. Reasoning upon the astounding piece of intelligence, Mr. Clissold remarked,

"Then you have no poachers over there?"

"None—in the English sense of the word."

"Wonderful! What do the justices do with their spare time? Perhaps, though, you haven't any magistrates there?"

"Oh! yes. Canada has a sufficient number of rogues to keep the magistrates in full employment."

"Labour, of course, is cheap there?"

"Just the reverse of cheap, sir. It's very dear."

"That's strange again. One is always hear-

ing of so many working-people going off to Canada, that I had a notion the place must be over-stocked with them."

"The dearness of labour and the greatness of wages draw the labourers over to Canada."

"To be sure. I see it now. If I were as shrewd as most of my neighbours I should have found that out for myself. But thank you, sir, for the information. It's a new fact for me; and facts are valuable—aren't they?"

Mr. Kinsman having answered in the affirmative, the Squire, intending to dismiss Canadian interests from the conversation, threw his right hand upwards a little way with a smart jerk, and remarked, "Your country bears a good character. I have always heard that Canada is a nicish island."

Whereupon the Squire received from his new acquaintance a lesson in geography—a lesson imparted with so much tact that it did not wound Hardy Clissold's self-love, who, on learning his error, remarked, "Well, it don't matter much to us in England; for we can't get to Canada without going over a goodish bit of

salt-water. So, in a certain sense, Canada is an island after all."

After a pause the Squire touched upon parochial matters, described the number and efficiency of the local charities, and expressed his readiness to accompany Mr. Kinsman to the church vestry, and show him the registers and archives of the sacred place.

"But before we go, Mr. Kinsman," the Squire observed, "there's a proposal I wish to make to you, if you'll allow me."

"Pray make it, sir."

"I have a son."

"I saw the young gentleman in church yesterday—a delicate youth, with a remarkably beautiful and expressive face."

A cloud came over the father's face.

"He *was* delicate, Mr. Kinsman, in his childhood; but he is all strong and hearty now—save that he has a weakness in his legs. And to humour his legs, and bring them up as stiff as they ought to be, the doctors make him wear some steel thingummies, that hamper his action, and make him walk as though he were lame."

A strangely tender look—a look of sadness and fine sympathy—came over the listener's face as the simple, childlike father thus exhibited his determination not to see the truth about his boy's health.

"To be sure," the clergyman assented; "but he has been delicate."

"*Has been!*" the father insisted, stubbornly. Raising his voice cheerily, he continued, "But now that he has grown strong, and the doctors certify that he may work his brain, he must push on with his learning. For myself, sir, I am a dull man—a slow man, though a sure—and as a boy I could not learn. I often feel the want of learning. I wish I had the education which my neighbours in the commission of peace have. But, so far as learning is concerned, 'wish' must be my master. My boy, however, is smart, clever, and always thinking, and he must be educated. Can you spare time to take him in hand, and be his tutor? That's what I want to know."

"Your offer, sir, is very kind and complimentary."

"Not at all. I am only trying to serve myself."

"You must allow me time to consider your proposal before I reply to it."

"By all means, take time, sir. Of course I am aware that some clergymen—who are men of family and property, or have good livings—wouldn't care to bother themselves with teaching a boy, or would even think it *infra dig.* to accept such an offer. And, for all I know, though you are no higher than a curate, you may be a man of family and considerable property."

"No pride or notions of dignity will decide me not to be your son's tutor, Mr. Clissold," the clergyman answered cordially. "Though I come of a gentle stock, I don't pride myself on my family so much as to think a tutor's office contemptible. And though I have so much private property (it isn't much) that I do not need to increase my income by teaching, I am quite poor enough to wish for a larger income."

"Then why not join hands with me at once?"

"I must first see how much leisure my clerical duties will leave; and then——"

"Yes; and then?"

"To be frank with you, I must see if your son is a lad whom I should like to teach."

"He is an amiable, fine-hearted boy, though I say it."

"His looks declare that. But I should not like to become his tutor if I at all doubted my ability to teach him thoroughly well."

"Ability! Why, sir, you are one of the cloth," the Squire answered with delightful simplicity. "A clergyman is always up in book-learning—at least, enough to teach a boy."

"Not always."

"Bless me, you don't mean to say so. But you are?"

"I am not sure that I am qualified to teach your boy. Within certain limits, I am a fairly good scholar. I know several Latin and Greek authors, can write fairly good Latin prose, and am well grounded in the rudiments of mathematics. But I have never been to college."

The Squire was astonished and perplexed.

He told Mr. Kinsman that he thought clergymen were always "college men and graduates."

Mr. Kinsman undeceived him.

"I know my own capabilities; and if on examining your son I should come to the conclusion that he ought to be taught by a more learned man than I am, I should decline to be his tutor."

"Jemmy is always reading novels and poetry. But beyond what he learnt from Ada's governess—who has left us now, as Ada has finished her education—he can't have much regular learning."

"I must ascertain what he knows. If he is beyond me, or nearly beyond me, in the ordinary studies of a boy, I shall say to you, 'Mr. Clissold, secure the services of a highly-trained Oxford or Cambridge man.' You understand me?"

"Quite."

After a minute's silence, the Squire ejaculated, "Anyhow, sir, if you decide to take Jemmy in hand, he'll have a man of honour for

his tutor. Your conduct in rating yourself as you do, and telling me that you are a long bit under the top of the market, is honest and honourable." The Squire grew redder than usual in the face, as he added, "Hang me, if it is not devilish honourable!"

Again Mr. Kinsman called Squire Clissold to order, without offending him. The clergyman was of opinion that the devil had no honour, nor any other kind of virtue with which a minister of the Gospel should like to be credited.

Whereupon Hardy Clissold recalled the obnoxious epithet, and in suitable terms apologized for his use of it.

Satan having been thus put out of court, the two gentlemen adjourned to the church, where the churchwarden put the curate in possession of his key of the parochial chest, and certain archives and articles which it devolved on the officiating clergyman of Sunningwold to hold in safe custody.

On returning from the vestry to the chancel

door, Hardy Clissold directed the new-comer's attention to the mural tablets of numerous deceased Clissolds—memorials which certified that the Squire's family had been in the parish for a hundred and fifty years, a length of time that appeared to the Squire to be commensurate with the remotest antiquity. Amongst the lettered slabs affixed to the walls was the tablet in memory of Hardy's elder brother; another in honour of that "upright magistrate" his father; and another which, had he read its inscription on the previous day, would have saved Mr. Kinsman from the error of supposing that Mrs. Porchester was the mother of the Squire's children. The legend on the oldest of all these marble testimonials to the worth of departed Clissolds told that the first Squire Clissold of Sunningwold had been Lord Mayor of London in the days of Queen Anne.

"Ah," said the Squire, in a tone of reverential awe, when Mr. Kinsman had read the inscription on this piece of masonry, "it was some-

thing to be Lord Mayor of London in those distant times. No one could be Lord Mayor then unless he had shown himself a very special personage."

"Your family, sir," Mr. Kinsman observed, after paying all fit attention to the stony records, "is one of which you may well be proud. Your pedigree may not go so far back as the Normans, but it comprises several generations."

"Bless you, sir," Hardy Clissold answered, warmly, "we Clissolds were settled in the country long before the coming of the Normans. Why, my grandfather could remember the first Norman fixing himself in the country. Not that I want you to think lightly of the Normans, who have always been upright men, first-rate shots, and strict preservers."

The only Normans, of whom the Squire had ever heard, were his neighbours of Clover Park and Gunton Hall, and their immediate progenitors.

At the church-door, the two gentlemen part-

ed from each other, after exchanging very hearty and sincere expressions of regard.

When the Sunningwold Hall party reassembled in the dining-room for lunch, Mrs. Porchester, Ada, and her brother found the Squire in a condition of fervid enthusiasm for Mr. Kinsman, whom he had found a very civil, obliging, and instructive young man, overflowing with valuable facts, and in every respect qualified to be an agreeable neighbour. The clergyman's reception of a certain educational proposal was highly to his credit. He had a nice little bit of property, could talk very sensibly about farm-stock, had acknowledged the great antiquity of the family of Clissold, and had given his caller a most lucid and complete account of the geography, laws, and customs of Canada. Hardy Clissold was sure that he should get on well with his new neighbour.

By all which demonstrations of their father's approval of the new-comer, Ada and her brother were greatly delighted. Nor were the young people insensible to the characteristic

amiability of Mrs. Porchester, who declared herself ready to make any sacrifice of her personal comfort that would conduce to the young clergyman's satisfaction with Sunningwold.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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